

LOVE IS THE SUM OF IT ALL



GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

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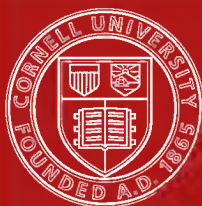
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AS SHE SANG RHETT ROSE FROM HIS CHAIR. — *Page 93.*

LOVE IS THE SUM OF IT ALL

A PLANTATION ROMANCE

BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY SOUTH," "A CAROLINA CAVALIER," "THE
MASTER OF WARLOCK," "EVELYN BYRD," "A DAUGHTER
OF THE SOUTH," "BLIND ALLEYS," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY HERMANN HEYER



BOSTON

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LOVE IS THE SUM OF IT ALL

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I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK WITH SINCERE
AFFECTION TO

Hazel M. Ross

WHO WROTE THE MUSICAL SCORE TO THE SONG THAT GIVES
THE BOOK ITS TITLE, AND TO

Jessie Stanley Hook

WHO HAS SUNG THE SONG DIVINELY ON SEVERAL
OCCASIONS BEFORE THE MANHATTAN
BRANCH OF THE DICKENS
FELLOWSHIP AND
ELSEWHERE

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Love Is the Sum of It All

I

A BELATED BREAKFAST

THREE bars of the gate were broken.

The gate, in its totality, consisted of five bars, after the custom of orthodox gates.

It stood open of necessity. How could it do otherwise, seeing that its diagonal backbone — the board that ran slantwise from its lower left-hand corner to its upper right-hand corner, — had yielded to the persistent persuasions of gravity and had parted in the middle?

The young man who stood contemplating the structure was dressed in a loosely careless fashion, though an observant woman, looking him over, would have seen that his carelessly worn garments were made of a superior cloth and fashioned by highly skilled hands.

Women observe these things closely. Men

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never do unless they happen to be tailors or detectives.

His trousers were worn inside his high boots, the tops of which reached nearly to his knees, and were decorated — or the reverse — with mud stains in various stages of drying.

He was a robust specimen of vigorous manhood — approaching thirty years of age — fully six feet high even if the boots had been removed, and well proportioned as to breadth of chest and size of limb. For head-piece he wore a limp felt hat which had never had any particular shape, and had lost that.

His appearance and attitude were suggestive of the intentional deliberateness of a man accustomed to vigorous and, if need be, hurried activity. His mood at this moment was a deliberate, observant one. His habit was to decide quickly and to act as the lightning flash does.

Turning his gaze from the gate, he ran his eye along the fence that was supposed to enclose the house grounds of the the old Southern mansion.

"The march of improvement is still slow here," he said to himself, with a half-laugh.

"When I was last here that fence had five breaks in it. It has nine now. In any other part of the world the breaks would have multiplied much faster than that." Then after a minute of meditation, he added:

"I wonder what it was ever built for, anyhow? There is nothing for it to shut out or shut in, and if there were, it utterly fails of its function by reason of the breaks in it and the decrepit condition of the gate."

At that moment the young man caught sight of a negro within the house grounds who was lazily trying to persuade himself that he was busy weeding out a flower-bed.

The young man walked over to the bed and for a time stood behind, watching the negro who seemed to be deliberating over a little bunch of yellow dock that grew detrimentally among the flowering plants.

"I think on the whole I'd pull it up, Henry," he said, presently.

At the sound of the voice the young negro sprang to his feet with the first show of energy that he had given for hours, and the greeting be-

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tween the two was cordial in the extreme, in spite of its informality.

In those old days that seemed so long gone by, Henry had been body-servant to Warren Rhett. Better still, they two — master and servant — had been companions in many a 'coon hunt, and devoted friends — each in his place as superior or inferior, and neither ever questioning the superiority or the inferiority in the pure democracy of their comradery. The superiority and the inferiority were real, and both the white and the black recognized the actuality. It was altogether well.

After that time Warren Rhett had gone away into the great world and had done things there, it was rumored on the old plantation, while Henry had remained, rejoicing in his slow promotion from dining-room boy to head dining-room servant at Mannamac, the plantation birthplace of both.

Not until the greeting was over, not until the white man and the negro had affectionately and fraternally asked all possible questions, each concerning the well-being of the other, did Warren

Rhett ask concerning the "Great House" and its inmates—or inmate, for he knew of but one. He had observed outgoing carriage tracks at the gate and no incoming ones. He knew, therefore, that his stepmother had driven away that morning and had not returned, and when he revealed this inference of acumen to Henry, that ardent admirer of his superiority promptly assumed the wondering mood of mind that secures success to a Sherlock Holmes story.

"Where has my mother gone?" the young man asked.

"Your mother, Mas' Warren!" half-asked and half-ejaculated the negro youth, "Why, you know you ain't got no mother."

"Well, yes, I know that. I mean my stepmother, Mrs. Rhett."

'Now that's funny, Mas' Warren,' answered the negro, laughing. "You see you an' Miss Kate was boy an' girl together, you bein' older'n she was. So it do seem funny when you calls her your mother."

Warren Rhett had thrown himself down upon the grass — lying face downward, with head and

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shoulders supported by his elbows, a posture that had been a favorite one with him in boyhood. Henry was laboriously and very slowly formulating the thought, "It's like ole times to see him lay that way on the grass," when the young white man interrupted the intellectual effort by saying:

"I suppose you never heard of atavism, did you, Henry?"

"No. What's that?"

"Never mind what it is. You've got it and you've got it bad. Didn't they teach you in school to talk like white folks? And didn't they specially impress upon your mind that as a man and a brother, you owed it to yourself never to call any white man master? Of course they instructed you to say 'Mister' instead — and they didn't tell you, because they didn't know, that 'Mister' is precisely the same word as 'Master,' though meanly and unworthily spelled."

"Now look a heah, Mas' Warren, you'se at your ole jokin' tricks agin. You know a po' nigga' like me don't know what any o' dem big words means. But if you mean I'm to implicate

all dem schoolmasters, an' call you ' Mr. Rhett ' instead o' ' Mas' Warren,' why you kin jes' tell de schoolmasters to go to de devil ! ”

“ Thank you,” said the young man, understanding. “ I'll not trouble to deliver the message to the worthy pedagogues — that means schoolmasters, Henry. But you haven't told me yet where Mrs. Rhett is.”

“ Oh, she's done gone away to a dinin' day, an' a stay all night, over at de abandoned place 'tother side o' the river.”

“ The abandoned place? What do you mean? ”

“ Well, maybe that ain't its right name. It's de place where de Bandons is come to live. It's de same we used to call Cassatts.”

“ Oh, yes, I see. You mean Bandonnais; newcomers have bought it, and renamed it.”

“ Dat's jes' ezac'ly it. Well, she's done gone over thah to dine an' stay all night, an' maybe even longer — I dunno. Anyhow she tole me not to bother 'bout meals to-day at Mannamac. She said she'd be home when she got home, or somethin' like that. You see they's what Miss Kate calls, a fascinatin' young lady a stayin'

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here, and they went over to dine at de abandoned place."

"Oh, there is, is there? Well, we won't bother to talk about her just yet. You see it is now twelve o'clock, noon, and I haven't had a mouthful of breakfast yet."

The negro sprang to his feet, appalled, horrified, distressed to the centres of his hospitable being.

Henry was a Virginian, with a pedigree. For two hundred years, or nearly that, his forebears had been house servants at Mannamac. For two hundred years, or nearly that, they had learned the lessons of hospitality which every Virginia plantation house inculcated by virtue of its very existence. If Warren Rhett had come to Mannamac as the veriest stranger at any time during all those two hundred years, the first instinct of the place — whether in black or white — would have been to offer him food and drink, quite irrespective of the time of day, or of his quality, or of anything else. And here young Warren Rhett, son of the house, long-time descendant of its ancient owners, and himself potential master there, had been kept for an hour or

more without his breakfast and without even an inquiry as to his possible hunger.

Henry was horrified! But young Rhett was self-composed.

“Don’t get excited, Henry,” he said. “Go and get me some breakfast instead. I suppose there’s a knuckle of cold ham about, and that’ll serve for a relish. But I am really hungry. So see if you can’t get me a roe herring and a pone of corn bread and a pitcher of buttermilk. Let me have the ham and a pot of coffee first, just to amuse me while the cook is getting the other things ready. And by the way, I suppose the tomatoes are ripe. Let me have two or three of them,—good, firm, fat fellows, well ripened, but not soft,—and don’t you dare slice or dress them. You see I’m an invalid, and must be careful about what I eat.”

The jest was lost upon Henry. The enormous breakfast ordered, seemed to him, with his life-long familiarity with healthy Virginia appetites, an exceedingly modest and moderate repast, well-suited to the needs of an invalid.

“I’m sorry you’re sick, Mas’ Warren,” he said

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as he hurried away, "but 'twont take us long to build you up again if you'll only stay here at Mannamac."

With that generously recuperative purpose the servitor hurried away, and when, a little later, the breakfast was served in the broad front porch under the honeysuckles, there were added to it some hot griddle-cakes, some soft boiled eggs, a dish of radishes, some young onions, a lettuce salad, and a joint apology from Henry and the cook for the inexcusable meagreness of the repast, prepared as it had been in a hurry. To set and bake a loaf of hot, light bread and a skillet of rolls — traditional breakfast necessities in Virginia — would have required more time than the hospitality of Mannamac could spare in such an emergency; but, anyhow, there was a supply of hot beaten biscuit coming if only Mas' Warren would "eat jest a little slow to let 'em brown."

"Mas' Warren" had no objection to eating "jest a little slow." He hadn't tasted a beaten biscuit for years, and he so far longed for a renewal of that gustatory delight as to be willing to wait for it.



A JOINT APOLOGY FROM HENRY AND THE COOK FOR THE IN-
EXCUSABLE MEAGRENESS OF THE REPAST. — *Page 10.*

But apart from that he had much to think of, and the thinking entertained him as he sat there in the porch and meditated to the music of the bees and the humming-birds that were busy with the honeysuckles all about him.

“What a beautiful conception of life it was,” he reflected, “with its lavish abundance, and its passionate ministry to human comfort as the one thing in all the world worthy of consideration! And what a pity it is that it was so utterly uneconomic and so far beyond the reach of the great majority of mankind! It would be the best of all worlds to live in if everybody could breakfast at leisure every day amid honeysuckles and surrounded by butterflies and bees and humming-birds, with six times as much of tempting food to eat as any reasonable palate could desire, with a perfect climate to breathe in, and with no sense of obligation or care or hurry to harass the soul. How the very memory of it tempts one to indulgence regardless of consequences! How it lures the soul to lethargy and the mind to meditation!

“I suppose my first concern ought to be for

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the countless millions of toiling human beings who cannot have even the smallest fraction of the joy that such a life should bring with every moment of the living — but in fact my first thought is of how to arrange matters so that Kate shall not be compelled to give up all that remains of it and lapse into some more wisely economic way of living that must rob life — so far as she is concerned — of all its desirability.”

He sat still for a time, sipping his coffee and letting his soul rest in sensuous but psychological delight. Then he took up the problem from another point of view.

“After all,” he asked himself, “what is the truth of the matter and what is best, and what is right? I wonder if the world would or could be in any way bettered by any scheme for the equalization of enjoyment among men? Perhaps the inequality belongs to nature’s scheme of progress for the human race, by means of a struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Certain it is that the cultured ease of this old Southern life gave to the American people — yes, and to the whole world, for the whole world has

benefited by it — the work of Washington and Jefferson and Patrick Henry and John Marshall and James Madison and the rest. Is not every man now living under American institutions, or under the inspiration of those institutions in other lands, — isn't every such man the better off because Washington and Jefferson and Madison and the rest had ease and leisure in which to ripen their minds and do the thinking that created this republic and its institutions? And has it not been well for us that the Adamses of Massachusetts, the Otises, the Hancocks, and the rest of that great company of patriots were men so well-to-do in the world that they had leisure for thought and for that higher education that comes only with ease? Add Ben Franklin, who had made a fortune before he began to serve the country in conspicuous ways, and the Morrisises, whose financial ability, acquired in the administration of their own great possessions, enabled them to carry the republic over the shoals of bankruptcy at the most critical period of our national history — and the question is a fair one, — Do not all the people profit more by the

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advantages the well-to-do enjoy, than they would by any possible scheme of equalization? Isn't nature's scheme best, after all — the scheme of struggle with the reward of advantage for those who win in the struggle? ”

At that point in his meditations Warren Rhett was interrupted by the advent of a process server. The man explained that, while the lawyers concerned and their clients also were exceedingly reluctant to make themselves in any way disagreeable to Mrs. Rhett, they felt bound to protect their own interests, and really, at the rate at which things seemed to be going to the bad on Manna-mac plantation, they had no choice but to levy upon the small droves of hogs and the smaller flocks of sheep which the negroes of the region round about were nightly depleting in aid of an evangelistic “revival” at that time in progress. Delay in making the levy might soon and easily result, the bailiff explained, in there being no herds or flocks left to levy upon.

“Henry,” said Rhett, assuming the duties of host, “bring a decanter of spirits for this gentleman, and some pipes.”

When the agent of the law was served with the refreshment, Rhett turned to him and said :

“ I wish you'd tell me all you know of the condition of things here. You see, I've come to find out and, if possible, to remedy whatever is wrong.”

The bailiff laughed, inwardly. Then he said :

“ I reckon 'most everything's gone to pieces round here. Fact is it's a race now to see who'll get what there is left of personal property. You see things have gone at such loose ends for so long that it's come to be a scramble for the leavings. I met Mrs. Rhett's carriage this morning, and if I'd 'a' done my duty I'd 'a' levied upon the horses. But she's such a nice young lady and — well, I just couldn't make the levy when I knew she was on her way to a dining day. So I thought I'd come over here and levy on the hogs and sheep instead.”

“ Whose claim is it you're set to satisfy? ”

Rhett asked the question quite indifferently, as if his interest in the reply were altogether casual and impersonal. Then suddenly reassuming his more habitual method of procedure, — that of

a man accustomed to do things and get things done,—he turned upon the bailiff and asked :

“ Who is the lawyer for the people you represent ? ”

“ Mr. Charles Danforth, sir ; and he is really distressed — ”

“ I can very well understand that, ” interrupted Rhett with a laugh which he hastily suppressed. “ Never mind about that. Now let me explain. *I suppose I own this plantation* if anybody does. I don’t know. I have no control over it for the present, but I think I can have whenever I please. The claims are all personal, and only the personal property is liable for them ! The plantation itself is in no way responsible and cannot be held responsible. Charley Danforth is too good a lawyer not to understand that. Besides that, *I* am in no way liable for any of these claims, and Charley Danforth knows that, too.”

The bailiff chuckled in a way that irritated Rhett, and replied :

“ I reckon you’re right about that, and I reckon that’s what bothers him. You see — ”

In that tone which he had acquired during

years in the command of men, Rhett interrupted:

“ I didn’t ask your opinion or your comments. Reserve them, please. Listen to me. I want all this thing stopped right now, and I am going to stop it right now. You are not to make any levies under the executions you have in your breast-pocket. Instead of that, you are to carry a note from me to Charley Danforth which — I promise you — will relieve you of all responsibility in the matter and hold you harmless. I think you know who I am, and that my promise is good for its face value? ”

“ That’s all right,” answered the bailiff, surreptitiously pouring another drink of the rare old peach brandy upon the honey that already occupied the bottom of his glass, and lovingly stirring the mixture; “ that’s all right, and I’m mighty glad to settle the thing that way. You see even a fellow like me don’t find it a nice sort o’ business to go round levyin’ on stock an’ persecutin’ a lady like Mrs. Rhett. That’s why I didn’t execute on the carriage horses. You see it’s awful hard on us fellers — ”

"Have just a taste more of the peach and honey," interrupted Rhett, "and while you're absorbing it, I'll write the note to Danforth. Henry, bring me some stationery — pens, ink, and paper, with envelopes, — don't you understand?"

Presently Henry apologetically brought his mistress's lap writing-desk, and Rhett found within it a half-ream of highly expensive, embossed paper, with envelopes to match.

"The paper and envelope," he reflected, "must cost a good deal more than the postage stamp, every time Kate writes a note, even if she confines herself to a single sheet of utterance — a thing she couldn't do to save her life. I remember once she wrote me a 'note' to tell me she had a pansy in blossom, and she used up ten sheets of paper in the process."

At that moment his eye lighted upon a sheet of the letter-paper, upon which Kate had made memoranda with respect to some proposed church fair — memoranda of cake, sandwiches, pickles, preserves, nasturtium seeds, and the like, which she, presumably, intended to furnish for the occasion. He did not follow up the search. He

was too truly a gentleman for that — but he could not help seeing that there were many other sheets of the costly paper, covered in like fashion with memoranda that might as well have been made upon foolscap, or still better, on a five-cent pad. But in all the recesses of the desk he found no scrap of ordinary paper, no sheet upon which a duchess might not have been proud to write her invitations to dinner.

“ I think I understand the situation,” he said to himself, “ and I think I shall be safe in assuming all responsibility — now that I am to be in charge.”

So, on one of the sheets of embossed paper, in the absence of anything less costly, he wrote :

“ DEAR CHARLEY: — I’ve come down here to straighten out Kate’s affairs. I’ve told your bailiff not to serve his executions, and that I would hold him harmless. I’m sending you this note by him. Kate’s away, to be gone overnight. Please come over and spend the night with me, so that I may get the hang of things here. And in the meantime, if there are any other lawyers at the

county-seat, who have judgments against Kate, please tell them to hold up their executions and processes and all that kind of thing till I can see them. Tell them I make myself personally responsible for everything to the extent of the plantation's value. I don't suppose that's legal, but it's good faith anyhow, and between you and me, good faith is better than a document 'signed, sealed, and delivered.' Of course you and I don't want Kate bedevilled. Come over and we'll arrange things."

The bailiff took the note, after still another drink of peach and honey, and two hours later a negro messenger brought a letter from Charles Danforth to Warren Rhett, in which the writer said:

"Welcome, old fellow! I'll be with you at supper. It's a good thing that you've come down here—good for Kate and especially good for me. I have already imperilled my position at the bar in my efforts to protect her against the interests of my own clients. The situation has been horrible. So, apart from the joy I shall

feel in being with you again, I send you a cordial welcome.

"I'll be at Mannamac by eight o'clock — or at any rate before nine — for supper and the night."

Rhett read the note with a smile.

"It's a funny situation," he said to himself. "Charley was madly in love with Kate before she was married. I doubt that he has quite got over it yet — especially now that she's a widow; and yet, as a lawyer he has had to do all sorts of disagreeable things to her. It's funny, though tragic. I wonder he doesn't solve the riddle by marrying her. Still, I don't know. That would put him in the complicated position of being himself defendant when he's already counsel for the plaintiff. Yes, it's a funny situation all around."

Then suddenly another thought arose in his mind. "I wonder how far or for how much I have made myself liable by that letter of mine? I have a shadowy impression that a promise, without consideration, to pay the debt of another is not legally binding. But I don't know just what constitutes a consideration in the legal sense. Besides, in such a case, the law cuts no

figure. I suppose that in honor I have made myself liable for Kate's debts, at least up to the value of the plantation. Anyhow, I mean to see her through. I wonder how much she owes. I've a notion to ride over to 'the abandoned place,' as Henry calls it, and ask her. Henry suggests that there is a fascinating young woman with her, so there might be worse ways of spending the evening. There! That's another case of atavism. It has been years since I thought of calling the afternoon 'evening,' and yet I find myself reverting to the usage, before I've been in the old atmosphere long enough to take a second meal. That reminds me of my manners. Henry said there was a 'dining day' over there. That means dinner at four o'clock, with every table seat 'reserved.' I should be an unwelcome and unmannerly intruder upon the carefully prearranged festivity. Besides, I doubt that there is a riding-horse on the plantation. On the whole —"

On the whole he went to sleep in a great, roomy, oaken armchair in the porch, thus again reverting to the customs that had been prevalent there for generations past.

II

THE PERPLEXITIES OF KATE

IT was not altogether in jest that Rhett had spoken of himself to Henry as an invalid. He had in fact been overworking in unwholesome surroundings. He had spent many hours throughout many weeks and months in tunnel headings. He had stood for many days throughout many other months in trenches, cuts, and deep excavations, up to his knees and sometimes up to his thighs in mud that reeked of miasm. Strong man that he was, he had endured these exposures, but little by little they had begun to tell upon him. Of late, he had had strange unaccustomed headaches, with lassitude and loss of appetite as an accompaniment. In short, he had found himself in that physical condition which is familiarly known as "run down," as if a man were a clock.

In obedience to the advice of his wise young

doctor friends, he had taken a little vacation in the Adirondacks, incidentally catching some fish that were worth talking about. That not sufficing, he had made a little trip to Bermuda and another to the Azores, but on his return he had found the headaches and the lassitude still his companions, and in addition a certain cough had come upon him. Concerning that, he had consulted a specialist, who, after a variety of soundings and thumpings and listenings and all the rest of it, had given his pronouncement in this fashion :

“There isn’t a thing the matter with your lungs. You have a slightly elongated uvula, but the elongation is not of enough consequence to justify me in clipping off the offending member. Your trouble is partly malarious and partly nervous. Generous food will combat the malaria, but for the nervous disturbance there is no remedy but a prolonged rest. Why don’t you go down to Virginia for a year — you tell me you’ve some sort of old home down there — and get the rest and good feeding you need?”

Things sometimes fall out as they should do,

even in this ill-ordered world of ours, and they did so in this case. It happened that Warren Rhett had just completed a piece of engineering construction which had agreeably fattened his bank-account. It happened that there was no other immediate job in sight that tempted his tired mind. Most important of all, it happened that he had that morning received a letter from his very young stepmother and old playmate, entreating him to come to her and extricate her from difficulties with which she needlessly assured him she was quite unable to cope.

"The idea of Kate dealing with a difficulty," he laughed, "or extricating herself from a financial embarrassment of any kind, is too ridiculous to be accepted, even if presented as a jest in professedly comic opera. After all, why shouldn't I run down there for a time and straighten out her affairs? I've nothing of consequence on hand, and I suppose the doctors are right in ordering me to take a rest. Anyhow, Kate is a dear good girl, and she needs help, and I can afford a vacation at Mannamac."

Warren Rhett was the son and only child of

an old Virginia planter. He had come into the world about the time at which the Civil War came to an end. The family seat, Mannamac, had been so fortunately placed, geographically, that it had pretty completely escaped spoliation by the military forces on either side of the great conflict.

So when Warren Rhett's father, Col. Lasseter Rhett, returned to his plantation after the surrender of Lee's army at Appomattox, he found everything as he had left it, except that the negroes were free.

The plantation — embracing several thousand acres — remained, and it was Col. Lasseter Rhett's plan to convert the broad domain into a "landed estate" of the English sort; to divide the arable lands into farms of convenient size, letting them to the negroes who had been "born and raised" on the plantation, and thus to continue the old patriarchal life in its essentials, if not quite in its previously existing form. The acres were many and fertile, and they were well placed for division into little farms. It was Col. Lasseter Rhett's plan to establish tenants upon most of

them, reserving the fields near the great house for cultivation by hired negro field hands, under his own direction.

Colonel Rhett was accustomed to believe implicitly in his ideas and to act upon them. His first step, therefore, was to employ a surveyor to lay out the farms, and his next to build a comfortable cabin on each of them, and to dig for each a well.

His plan met with disappointments. Not many of the negroes consented to undertake the cultivation of farms on their own account. Not many of them had the ambition, the instinct of enterprise to do so. The greater number of them were dazed and dazzled by their new-found freedom. They vaguely understood that they were to be free "like white folks," thereafter, and their conception, both of the freedom and of the likeness to white folks, was that they should live at ease, without toil. That, as they understood it, was the measure and test of freedom. Precisely how they were to live without work, they did not pause to inquire. Perhaps the government that had set them free would take care of that. Why

should it not do so? Was it not omnipotent? And had it not the power to manufacture money without limit? Was not it their new master, upon whom to lean as they had been accustomed to lean upon their old masters?

The one obvious way to accept and enjoy freedom was to quit the work they had been required to do in slavery.

To many others among them the obvious way to accept and assert their newly acquired freedom was to quit the plantations to whose boundaries the slave system had limited their residence, and to go elsewhere. These were lured by their gregarious instincts to the cities, and the cities also tempted them with noise and glare and glitter, and with a promise of the excitement for which their childish souls hungered and thirsted. They had seen city negroes now and then, dandies, smartly dressed in the well "tailored" cast-off clothing of their employers, and still more smartly equipped with self-assertive manners borrowed from the same source of supply, and they could not help envying these fortunate ones of the earth. Many a gawky, lumbering,

plantation negro, with big feet and shapeless hands and muscularly ungraceful form, fell into the mistake of supposing that it was only necessary for him to migrate to a city in order to transform himself into one of these admirable beings. And many of these mistaken ones starved in the process of learning how great a mistake he had made in quitting the plantation.

A few, a very few of the most trustworthy of Colonel Rhett's old field hands — most of them middle-aged or elderly men with families — became tenants of his farms, agreeing to pay a portion of their agricultural produce in lieu of rent. In the main these depended upon their grown or half-grown children to help them out as laborers upon the farms thus rented. In the main they were disappointed by the fact that the younger ones, upon whom they depended for labor, migrated to the cities instead, leaving them to make such meagre crops as they could, and leaving Colonel Rhett with a rent return so small that it did not pay the interest on the cost of the improvements he had put upon the farms.

Many of the farms remained unrented, and for

the cultivation of these and of the home acres, he hired such negroes as he could secure. A few of them fairly earned their wages. The rest were an expense to him rather than a source of profit. They plundered his orchards of fruit that he had planned to sell in northern markets. They robbed his hen-roosts and his pig-pens and his sheepfolds, and even stripped his patches of early corn, melons, beans, and vegetables of their yield, surreptitiously selling the plunder in those early city markets to which he had looked for revenue.

There remained a score or two of more or less useless house servants who loyally stuck to their old master, literally "for all he was worth," and fared sumptuously every day upon his bounty.

In the meanwhile the elder Rhett had gone on living as he had done before the war — generously, and with a lavishness of hospitality which he could not afford. It was his undying purpose to "live like a gentleman" so long as he lived at all, and he had no other conception of a gentleman's way of living than the lordly one that he daily practised. In maintaining that, he drew upon such resources

as he possessed, outside the plantation, slowly but surely depleting them to the point of exhaustion.

His son Warren early saw what the end must be, and personally set to work to provide himself with the means of living at all when his father's methods should have made an end of the means of living like a gentleman. The boy worked hard at his books, and after taking his degree at the University of Virginia,—a thing he regarded as useless, involving as it did a considerable waste of time, but a thing that his conservative father insisted upon,—he went North for a course in one of the great schools of engineering.

After his graduation there, he went back to Mannamac for a vacation, and while there he narrowly escaped falling in love with Kate Oberly, his father's ward and at the time mistress of Mannamac. Warren Rhett's mother had died during his infancy, and Col. Lasseter Rhett had no daughter to rule over his household. Things there had gone at loose ends until Kate Oberly, the orphaned ward of Col. Lasseter Rhett, who had lived at Mannamac from her earliest child-

hood, had grown old enough to carry the keys and do the "giving out."

She was scarcely more than a child when Warren Rhett went away to study engineering, and his attitude toward her had been that of an older brother who was also a good comrade. When he returned, after his graduation as an engineer, Kate had grown into a charming young womanhood, without losing anything of her girlish frankness and simplicity. She was utterly inconsequent in her methods of thinking, but the inconsequence was amusing and it seemed to Warren an added charm.

Under other circumstances than those that actually existed, he would very certainly have fallen in love with her. He was saved from that at first by the old boy and girl comradery, and a little later, when she saw that the comradery threatened to become something warmer on his part, she saved him again by her frankness.

"Warren," she said to him one morning, apropos of some show of tenderness on his part, "you mustn't let yourself fall in love with me, you

know. You're inclined to do that, but you simply mustn't."

In half-bantering fashion he answered:

"Without for one moment admitting the truth of your accusation, Kate, and still more emphatically, without disputing it, may I ask why I should not fall in love with you if I want to? Surely you are a very lovable young woman, and if I fall a victim to your charms, as many another man will doubtless do, why should I not risk —"

She held up her hand to check his speech.

"Hush!" she commanded. "Let me tell you. You mustn't fall in love with me — though, if things were different, I should be awfully glad to have you do so, because I don't know anybody so nice as you are, or so strong and so manly — but, as I say, you simply mustn't fall in love with me, — *because*."

"Because what, Kate?"

She hesitated, pulling a rose to pieces and scattering its petals as if trying to make a mosaic pattern of them on the porch. Presently she seemed to pull herself together, and with resolution she said:

"Your father is going to marry me, Warren. I don't think he ought to do that, but I can't help it. He has told me of his intentions and of course —"

"Of course, Kate, I wish you every joy in the world, and I will say this honestly, that if my father has made up his mind to marry anybody, I had rather it should be you than any other woman I know. I've just time to say this, as I had a letter this morning that calls me to the north at once. I'm sorry to miss seeing father to bid him good-by, but he's gone away for the day, and I simply must catch the earliest train. Good-by! and God bless you!"

She called him back as he was leaving:

"You don't mind?" she asked.

"I could not think of making myself my father's rival," he answered.

"That isn't it," she rather petulantly interrupted. "I mean, you understand? Of course your father —"

"Of course. I perfectly understand. I must go now, or I'll miss my train. If you are ever in difficulty and need a friend, you know whom to call upon."

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A moment more and he was gone. He had not kissed the girl, even in the brotherly fashion that had once been accepted between them as a matter of course. She was glad of that, though, to save her life, she could not have given a reason for her gladness.

The letter that Warren said he had received that morning was purely mythical, as Kate Oberly would have known if she had questioned his statement in her own mind. For she had herself distributed the contents of the mail-bag at the breakfast-table, and there had been no missive in it for Warren. It was not her habit of mind, however, to question things in that fashion. And besides, it was far better that Warren should go away to the north—better for him and for her, better in every way.

A few months later, Col. Lasseter Rhett carried out his purpose of marrying his ward, Kate Oberly. At the time that occurred Warren Rhett was in the mountains of Peru, in the double capacity of expert engineer and superintendent of construction, building a railroad from the coast to a long abandoned but very rich Inca mine which his

associates and employers intended to "develop." He was too far away to attend the wedding,—he had thought of that in accepting the Peruvian appointment,—but he had deft fingers and a mechanical knack that often stood him in good stead. Bringing these to bear, he took an ancient goblet of virgin gold, the handiwork of some antique Inca goldsmith, which was supposed to have magic qualities of some kind, and with his own hands encircled it with precious stones, imbedding them firmly in the metal of the cup. This he sent to Kate as a wedding-present, making a jest of the matter in an accompanying letter in which he set forth his own utter isolation there in the mountains, and his inability to find a shop in which to purchase any orderly gift for the occasion.

With all her in consequence of mind, Kate had understood. Thus had ended the first romance in the life of Warren Rhett, and fortunately the experience had left no scar.

A few years later Col. Lasseter Rhett was gathered to his fathers. At the time, Warren was in the Yaqui country of Mexico, engaged in

bringing a great scheme of irrigation to completion. His first news of his bereavement did not reach him until a month or two after the event. It came to him in a long delayed letter from Kate, in which she explained the disposition his father had made of his property.

That disposition was an entirely characteristic one. The lordly old gentleman had in no degree realized his own gradual impoverishment. In his will, as in his way of living, he had assumed that he was the owner of a great estate — a man who could do as he pleased in the generous disposition of wealth. He had left his plantation, Mannamac, to his widow Kate, during her natural life, subject, however, to a charge of some thousands of dollars a year, which were to be paid by her to his only son, Warren Rhett, to whom he directed that the plantation itself, and all else that he owned, should revert upon Kate's death.

Poor Kate! The plantation wasn't earning the sum she was charged to pay, and there was no reason to believe that it ever would earn any such sum.

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Kate consulted the family lawyer, — or, more accurately speaking, she peremptorily directed the family lawyer to remit to Warren Rhett the sum to which he was annually entitled under the will. The lawyer told her that there were no funds from which to draw the amount, but the information made no impression upon her mind.

“That is what Colonel Rhett directed,” she answered, as if ending the discussion, “and of course we must do what he directed.”

“But, my dear Mrs. Rhett,” the lawyer pleaded, “the estate is not earning any such sum, and there is no reserve fund anywhere upon which to draw for it. I simply cannot —”

“Then I don’t see what you are a lawyer for,” Kate interrupted. “Why, Colonel Rhett directed it, and of course he knew. Anyhow, it must be done. It would be awful to violate his will. Of course you see that as clearly as I do, — don’t you?”

“Of course,” the lawyer replied. “We won’t talk any more about it. I’ll arrange it somehow.”

And he did. He wrote to Warren Rhett, ex-

plaining the situation, and Warren Rhett replied, suggesting that the lawyer should send him every year a formal document which he would sign and return, setting forth his receipt of the money in due form. The delivery of this paper to Kate, he pointed out, would satisfy her mind that Colonel Rhett's last will and testament was being executed to the letter. "Of course Kate will never think to inquire how or where you got the money," he wrote, "and the main thing is to keep her satisfied and comfortable."

So Kate went on living in comfort and satisfaction. The only style of living that she knew anything about was that which had always obtained at Mannamac, and she continued that. She kept a generously open house, with four or five times as many servants as were needed, and these justly counted themselves as among the fortunate ones of the earth. They had no fixed wages, it is true, but they were in the same case with soldiers who are "living off the country," in the enemy's domain. They had food in abundance from the Mannamac smoke-house and the Mannamac storeroom. Kate could not bear to

have any one about her ill-dressed, and so she gave them clothes whenever the need arose.

She was particularly fond of good horses, and she had a stableman who always knew when there was a desirable animal for sale anywhere in the neighborhood. She availed herself of his skill in horse-flesh, and did not herself pretend to know what price ought to be paid for a horse. "And after all it is a small matter," she used to say, "as I keep only a very few riding animals besides the carriage-horses. It really can't matter much, and Blanton knows what he ought to pay."

Col. Lasseter Rhett had been a man of excellent credit. It had always been understood, not only among the people round about, but in the office of his Richmond commission merchants, that Colonel Rhett was a man well "able to owe his debts." This credit Kate inherited with the plantation, and on the strength of it she ordered whatever she wanted and continued to live in the old way, while little by little, for lack of attention and direction, the plantation was losing what was left of its earning capacity.

The home fields were cultivated only in such

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fashion as the negro hands she hired saw fit to bring to bear. Many of the farms were without tenants, and if a tenant was very poor and had "bad luck" with his crops, Kate could not bring her kindly soul to exact her share of his little yield as her rent.

The story of decay need not be told in detail. Its end was inevitable. As Kate had only a life estate in the land, it could not serve as a basis of credit or as a security for her debts. Her creditors were many, and after awhile they began to be insistent. But it was not until executions were levied upon her favorite riding-horses, that Kate became seriously alarmed and appealed to Warren Rhett for help and guidance.

He was just finishing some construction work in New York when her letter came to him. He had been successful, not only as an engineer, but still more as the head of a contracting firm. He had made money enough to be very comfortable, and his firm was in the way to go on making money with ease and certainty. But for the time being, he had nothing of pressing importance on his hands, nothing that his partners could not

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manage without his presence. In brief, the time had come when he could conveniently take the vacation he needed.

Kate wrote:

“MY DEAR WARREN: — I reckon you will just have to come down here and fix things. I don’t understand what’s the matter, but these lawyers and bailiffs and people are persecuting me with papers that I don’t know the meaning of, and as I’ve never done any harm to anybody, I can’t see why they shouldn’t let me alone. I didn’t so much mind so long as it was only papers and things of that kind, but — you’ll hardly believe it, but it’s true — they have actually come here to Mannamac and carried away all my horses except the carriage-horses, and a lot of other things of mine. I am too badly bothered in my mind to tell you all the things they have done, but you being a man, I suppose you can guess at most of it. Anyhow, I am pestered to death and I want you please to come down and stop them from annoying me. You know you wrote me a month ago that you thought of coming to Mannamac

for a good long rest, so I know you can come now, and you'll be more welcome than I can tell you. We haven't any hounds now or any of the setters. You see I couldn't look after the creatures, so I gave them all away. But if you want to hunt while you are here, I think you might borrow some dogs, though there aren't many about here since the big plantations were divided up and sold off in pieces."

She added a number of sheets over which her pen had travelled to no particular purpose. Upon reading the missive, Warren laughed in his careless way and ejaculated, "Poor Kate! I suppose I'll have to go to her rescue."

Thus it came about that he was now at Man-namac, awaiting the return of its mistress, whom he had not informed of his coming.

"It would only bother her," he had said.

III

ISAAC'S POINT OF VIEW

WARREN RHETT was not much given to somnolence in other hours than those that he spent in bed. Tired as he was with an all-night journey and with his long walk that morning, he did not sleep for many minutes in his chair in the porch. When he had had his "forty winks," he aroused himself and summoned Henry.

"Who is head man now?" he asked the negro.

"Ole Isaac," answered the servitor.

"Do you know where to find him at this hour?"

Henry laughed half-outwardly, half-inwardly.

"Reckon he's up roun' de bawn, 'bout now. Leastways he ginerally takes a nap there 'bout this time of day."

Young Rhett was not surprised. He had traversed half the cultivated part of the plantation in his morning's approach to the house, and his

quick observation of the fields and growing crops — or those that were supposed to be growing — had prepared him to believe that not only the head man, but all the men under him were accustomed to sleep a good deal during the daylight hours.

“Go and find him. Throw a bucket of water over him to wake him up, and tell him I want to see him here right away.”

Henry departed on his mission with an elasticity in his step which was suggestive of eagerness to obey his orders. As a matter of fact, there had long been something akin to war between Isaac, the head man of the fields, and Henry, the head man in the house, and Henry rejoiced in an errand that involved permission to throw a pail of water over his sleeping adversary.

It happened, however, that at this particular time Isaac was not asleep. He had entered the barn a little while before, intent upon seeking his midday repose. But a colony of energetic hornets had recently established themselves there, and by ill luck Isaac had managed in some way to disturb their adverse possession. When Henry reached

the barn Isaac was diligently engaged in an effort to effect a retreat without incidental destruction, while the hornets were opposing that strategic endeavor with all the generalship they could bring to bear. So when Henry, with his bucket of water in hand, opened the barn door and threw the water with admirable precision over the head and shoulders of his adversary, he made of himself the most effective possible reinforcement to Isaac. Before the hornets could recover from the watery assault and the consequent confusion, Isaac had made good his retreat, closing the barn door behind him.

He was badly stung in many places, but at least and at last he was out of the zone of fire and was free to reckon up damages.

Henry, who was not at all a bad-natured fellow, laughed a little under his breath, and then rejoiced that he had saved his adversary from a punishment severer than even he deserved.

After Isaac had done all the rubbing and muttering and disguised swearing that seemed likely to serve emollient purposes, Henry informed him of Warren Rhett's presence at the Great House,

and of his desire to see Isaac as promptly as possible.

If it had been Rhett's purpose to criticize the work of cultivation as conducted under Isaac's direction, or to question him in any wise concerning it, he changed his mind before Isaac presented himself at the porch. Perhaps he had decided to deal with that subject in a larger and more vigorous way — or perhaps he had merely decided to let it await further inquiry on the morrow. However that may be, he in fact made no mention of the matter to Isaac. Instead he said:

“I want you to set all your people at work at once on that fence,” — pointing to the enclosure of the house grounds. “Set all the house servants at work upon it and everybody else you can get. I want every rail and post and stick of it removed to the wood-pile and stacked up there — not in your usual slovenly way, but neatly. And I want every stick of wood there is in the wood-pile corded up in the same way. Then I want all those chips that litter the ground out there picked up and piled. You can set the chaps at that.”

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“Chaps,” in Virginia, signified negro children always.

“Well, I never!” exclaimed the head man. “Is you a gwine to build a teetotally new fence, Mas’ Warren?”

Here again was a case of reversion — of atavism. Isaac had attended an educational institute for a time. He had there been drilled out of the dialect, and ordinarily he did not use it. But upon coming into contact with his old young master, and hearing again the superior tones of command, he lapsed at once into the speech and the submissiveness of his youth, as the retired cavalry-horse obeys the bugle-calls.

“Never mind what I mean to do,” answered the master. “What I want you to do is to remove that fence to the wood-pile where it belongs. It is composed of hickory and ash — all good fire wood, well seasoned. But I want it piled neatly, you understand, and not in the slovenly way common down here. However, I’ll go to the wood-pile and superintend that myself. You call everybody and set ’em all at work.”

By this time Isaac had recovered his institute

breeding and the speech that belonged to it. He answered :

“ Very well, Mr. Rhett. I'll set the entire force at work the first thing to-morrow morning.”

“ To-morrow morning, no ! ” answered the young man. “ At sunrise to-morrow morning I shall have every hand on the plantation at work in the fields, each with a hoe in his hand, and I'll be there to see that every one of them uses his hoe in a way to earn his wages. This little job must be done this afternoon. So hustle yourself.”

The man obeyed, but there was deep resentment in the manner of his obeying. The resentment was many-sided. It was first of all temperamental. In the very fibre of his being, Isaac resented the requirement that he should do now what he might as well do to-morrow. In the second place, the resentment was habitual. Isaac had not been used, for years, to have any one compel his action, and he resented the necessity of submitting to such compulsion. Thirdly, his resentment was racial. During all the years of his freedom he had rejoiced above all things

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in the thought that no white man was or could be his master. He had rolled that thought like a sweet morsel under his tongue, never learning the first lesson of freedom — submission to authority where authority is rightly constituted and rightfully used. After a fashion common enough in the crude thinking of uneducated or miseducated minds, he had interpreted liberty to mean exemption from duty, and especially from the duty of obedience.

Because no white man could claim mastery over him by virtue of being a white man, Isaac had fallen into the habit of thinking that under any and all circumstances he was entitled to resent and resist the assertion of authority by any white man. Such education as he had received in the schools strongly tended to confirm him in this mistaken view of human obligations. He had learned to regard all authority as slave driving, all obedience to authority as slavish submission. That was the net result of education in Isaac's case, as it was in the case of many another, and in obedience to such teachings he would have refused to obey the order given him if he

had dared. But he did not dare. He knew that in some way, which he did not at all understand, Warren Rhett was, or could at will make himself, master of this plantation, and even the education of insolence which he had received had not robbed him of the capacity to understand that he must obey Warren Rhett's orders or quit the plantation. As he did not want to quit the plantation, he obeyed the orders, — sullenly and reluctantly.

Young Rhett did not concern himself with the man's mood. He was accustomed to command men in large numbers, and he was familiar with all the moods and tenses of obedience and disobedience. He cared nothing whatever for the mood so long as the tense of obedience was the present.

It was his own habit of mind to regard the present tense as the only one in which the work of this world is done, or can be effectively done. So, when the fence had been removed to the wood-pile, and the wood-pile had been reconstructed upon orderly lines, after a fashion that every negro on the plantation secretly regarded as

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absurdly "fussy," he summoned Isaac to the porch and questioned him.

"How many field hands have you?" he asked.

Isaac couldn't answer on the instant. He had to reckon up his working force before he could report its strength.

"How many acres of corn have you?" interposed the exigent questioner, before his first inquiry had been answered. Then followed other questions, as if fired from a Gatling gun.

"How many acres of wheat? How many tobacco hills? How much spinach? How many beans? How many tomatoes?" and so on to the end of the list.

The net result of the inquiry was to show that Isaac had planted about one-half, or a little less, of the crop that his working force ought to cultivate. Rhett called attention to the fact, and then opened another line of inquiry.

"As you planted less than half a crop, why haven't you cultivated that half?" he asked. "The weeds are choking the corn to death. The worms are eating up the tobacco, much of which hasn't been topped or primed as it ought to be.

The truck patches are badly neglected, and the wheat ought to have been cradled a week ago. It is overripe, and the grain is being wasted on the ground. I observed a field of oats that has been lost entirely. It was ripe two weeks ago, and it wasn't cut. It isn't worth cutting now. What is the matter with you? Why haven't you tried to do your duty or some small part of it?"

The man began to make apologies. Chiefly he urged the fact that the mules, or at any rate the best of them, had been seized upon executions for debt. That seemed to him a sufficient excuse for his neglect of the crops. It did not impress Warren Rhett in that way.

"Mules are not needed in cutting oats or cradling wheat," he responded. "And as for the rest of the crops, you have hands enough to cultivate them all with the hoe, and you're going to do it and do it right, beginning to-morrow morning at sunrise. First of all, I want all the men who know how to handle a cradle put into the wheat to save what is left of it. I want all the hogs that are left on the plantation turned into the oat-field this afternoon to get what good

they can out of it. Then I want everybody but the cradlers to turn out to-morrow morning with hoes. I'll be there to tell them what to do."

All this was to Isaac a new method of procedure — a new and utterly unreasonable manifestation of energy. He began to offer objections, excuses, pleas in abatement, as it were, of such activity. Rhett did not listen.

"You have your orders," he said. "Obey them to the letter or quit the plantation."

Isaac promptly took his stand upon his privileges.

"But you can't turn me off the plantation," he said. "I've got a cawntrac' for the year."

Rhett's first impulse was to reply angrily. His second thought seized upon the humor of the situation — and upon its pathos also, for the thought of such a man as Isaac venturing to oppose the will of such a man as Warren Rhett in a contest of wits and intelligence was really pathetic. So instead of answering angrily or peremptorily, young Rhett took up the matter persuasively.

"So you've a contract, have you, Isaac?"

"Yessir."

"Might I inquire what your notion of a contract is?"

"It's a agreement for a year," answered the man.

"Oh, I see. It binds Mrs. Rhett to keep you as her head man for a year?"

"Yes, dat's it" — Isaac had relapsed again into the dialect.

"And doesn't it bind you to anything?"

"Why, yes, of course — I'se got to stay out de year."

"Is that all? Doesn't it bind you to do your work in a capable way? Doesn't it bind you to manage the crops here as they ought to be managed?"

"I dunno. I never thought o' that."

"So I had supposed. Well, now do you understand that a contract is a mutual agreement — an agreement between two persons — each of whom binds himself to do something in return for what the other promises to do? You know perfectly well that you haven't done your duty under this contract. Perhaps you don't know that that

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annuls the contract as completely as if the paper were torn to bits and burned in the fire. But that is the fact. Now understand me. I've come down here to straighten things out, and before I finish they'll be as straight as a chalk-line. I may have to drive everybody off the plantation who is now on it. I hope not. But if I meet with opposition of any sort, that is what will happen. Now Isaac, Henry will bring you some spirits, and I want you to drink to the new order of things. To-morrow morning I want everybody on the plantation to set to work in the way I have explained to you. I don't know how long I shall stay here, but so long as I do stay I am going to be master and my word shall be law."

Isaac was questioning his soul as to all this.

"Den we ain't free, after all?" he asked.

"Free? Yes. You can go whenever you please. But while you stay you must obey me. Sit down on the steps again and let me repair some of the defects of the education your school-masters gave you."

The negro sat down, listening, and the young white man took up his parable.

"You negroes have been taught a totally false gospel of liberty. You have been taught that when a man's free he may do as he pleases, regardless of all other men. Now there is not in all the world a man who is free in any such sense as that, and there never was and there never will be. Do you understand that, Isaac?"

Isaac did not respond. He had secured a comfortable corner of the steps, with a pillar to lean his head against, and he was sound asleep.

"That is the trouble with the whole race," muttered the young man of affairs. "They are sound asleep, and yet there are men and women — especially women — who dream of equality between that race and our own, and who would have us spend multi-millions in an effort to lift those chronically sleepy ones to the level of a race of men who have kept themselves awake through countless centuries."

With the toe of his boot inserted into the intercostal spaces of the negro, he stirred the man to consciousness. Having done so, he said:

"I freely pardon your somnolent inattention. But bear in mind that at sunrise to-morrow I

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expect every cradler to be in the wheat, and every other hand to be in the fields with his hoe. I'll be there myself and I'll take no excuses. In the meantime you are to go and turn the hogs into the oat-field. I'll go out at sunset to see that you have done it."

That night a doleful rumor spread over the plantation. The burden of it was: "We's got to wuk, jes' like in slavery times."

IV

KATE

IT was an hour or so before the appointed time when Charley Danforth dismounted at the door of Mannamac. In the meanwhile Warren Rhett's trunks had come and he had made some changes in his costume. The high boots had given place to low-cut shoes, with silver buckles on their insteps. For trousers he wore white ducks, and his coat of blue flannel had no vest beneath it to obscure the whiteness of his starchless negligée shirt.

Dinner had been served at the traditional hour of four o'clock, and after dinner young Rhett had strolled out to the oat-field to see how many hogs were feeding upon the waste grain.

Incidentally he encountered Isaac, the head man.

"I will have some mules here before night," he said. "I have sent a chap over to the court-

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house with a note to a drover who is there. I want you to put the ploughs into this field and every other field that hasn't a growing crop on it."

"Good Lawd!" responded the negro. "What you gwine to do wid 'em this time o' year? It's too late to plant corn or tobacco, an' it ain't late enough to sow wheat. So what is you a settin' us a ploughin' for?"

"Turnips, for one thing," Rhett answered. "Winter lettuce and spinach for two others. Winter wheat for still another. That's enough to occupy your mind for a week or so to come. Then I'll mention other things. In the meanwhile I want every arable acre of this plantation, that isn't now growing a crop, to be ripped up with a plough and got ready for such planting as can be done this late in the season."

"Good Lawd!" again ejaculated the negro, tired even unto death by the very suggestion of such activity.

"That's all right," answered the young man, jauntily. "We'll look to the good Lord for rains and sunshine, and he has already put fertility

into the ground. So what we've got to do is to plough and harrow and plant and hoe, and we're going to do our part."

Again the negro, weary to the centres of his soul, ejaculated:

"Good Lawd!" but young Rhett paid no heed. He had given his orders. He meant that they should be obeyed. Isaac understood that and grieved.

Rhett had sent a note to the drover, saying: "Besides the mules, I want a horse — a good one, strong enough to carry my hundred and seventy pounds of weight. I don't care whether he is broken or not. I can attend to that myself. If you have such a horse bring him over to be looked at. But it won't be worth your while to bring over any spindle-legged, narrow-chested, thin-hipped animals. I know a good horse when I see him. If you've a really good one, bring him over for me to look at. If you haven't a good one, don't bother me."

The drover understood. He knew he was dealing with an expert, whom it was of no use to

try to deceive. He was convinced also that he was dealing with a man who would not hesitate to pay a fair price for a really good animal. So he picked out of his drove a young mare, utterly unbroken and altogether demoniacal of disposition.

"I reckon she'll amuse him for a few days, anyhow," he said. "Maybe he can ride her, and then again maybe he can't, but anyhow he seems to think he's ready to take the risk."

The drover "personally conducted" the mare to Mannamac, not caring to entrust her waywardness to any of his assistants, who took mules over for inspection. She was a beautiful creature, large and strong, with lean neck and slender pasterns, deep chest, high withers, and the sloping hips that in a mare indicate a kicker.

The mules and the mare arrived about six o'clock. Warren looked over the mules, selected those that he wanted, and after a little bargaining bought a dozen or so of them.

Then he examined the mare. She was excessively nervous and excited at the time.

"Poor girl!" the young man said, soothingly.

"They've been tormenting you and you're unstrung. Never mind. We'll give you a good quiet stall to-night and let you get rested. Sometime to-morrow, after you've got over their rudeness, you and I will come to an understanding."

The drover had already named his price for the animal; Warren Rhett had deducted fifty dollars from it, and had said:

"Of course you'll take what I offer, and so I'll take the mare."

The drover was delighted. He had tried to sell the beautiful creature to each of a dozen other men, each of whom had declined to take her, after trying her and finding himself thrown to the ground with a degree of violence that he did not care to have repeated. The drover had expected Rhett to try her in like manner, and while he was glad enough to make a sale, he had enough of honesty in him to suggest a trial before the conclusion of the bargain.

"It is not necessary," young Rhett answered. "The mare suits me, and I can ride her."

"Well, *kin* you?" asked the drover — his interest in horsemanship overcoming his concern

for the profits of a sale. "A good many other folks has thought they could, and has changed their minds."

"Yes, I know. The mare has been tortured by experiments of that kind, and she is at present in a state of intense nervous irritability. I don't blame her. It is the misfortune of every perfect horse to have a contest with a lot of human fools. If my price is right I'll take the mare, and if you have curiosity enough, you may ride over here to-morrow and see her carrying me about the plantation and never making trouble over anything that she understands."

"You must 'a' had experience with hosses?" said the drover, with a note of incredulity in his voice.

"A little, yes," answered Rhett. He did not care to add that in addition to the fact of his bringing up as a Virginia boy, he had found occasion to "bust" many a broncho in Mexico, New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona, or that on the pampas of South America he had lassoed many a wild horse and subdued him to his will. He said only:

“I think I can ride the mare when she quiets down. At any rate, I’ll pay the price I’ve offered and take the chances. Is it a bargain?”

The transaction ended. Rhett dismissed all the gaping negroes who had come to see him killed, and, gently caressing the mare, led her to the stall he had selected for her. There he gave her a pail of water, for which she thirsted. Then with his own hands he rubbed her down, taking pains during the process to handle all her feet, and especially to caress her head and to deal gently with her sensitive ears, rubbing them and her head until she recognized the massage as a kindly attention and welcomed it. All the while he talked to the animal. “In company,” he said, “your name is to be Dolly Varden, but just between you and me, you’re simply Dolly. Don’t you think that sounds more affectionate and chummy? And you and I are going to be chums, you know, and you aren’t to be bothered any more by those rude fellows that have been trying to ride you against your will. I don’t blame you for objecting. There, old girl, are you comfortable now? I’ll give you ten ears of corn and a rack

full of fodder and another pail of water for the night, and I'll lock the stable door so that nobody shall come near you till I come to give you your breakfast and a good rubbing down in the morning."

With that he quitted the stable, giving orders that nobody was to go near the mare — to whose care he would himself attend — and returning to the house just in time to receive his visitor.

"I'm glad you sent me word that Kate — Mrs. Rhett I mean — was to be gone overnight," Charley Danforth said after the first greetings of the old schoolmates were over. "You see, even as it is, my coming to Mannamac is a bit awkward, — I am distinctly *persona non grata*, you know."

"Stuff and nonsense," responded Warren Rhett. "Why, if Kate were to drive up at this moment, she would welcome you as cordially as if there had never been a lawsuit or an execution or anything else. She might try to be dignifiedly repellent in her manner, but the moment she tried to remember why she should be so, she'd find herself puzzled and appeal to you helplessly

for information and guidance in the matter. Then, if you laughed, as you probably would, she would laugh with you and challenge you to say why you hadn't been here to see her all these many moons. I'm astonished at you, Charley. You know Kate, or you ought to."

"Yes, I understand all that, but —"

At that moment a carriage entered the grounds, rolled around "the circle," and stopped at the stone carriage block.

The two young men gallantly hurried forward and opened the door of the vehicle, from which descended Mrs. Kate Rhett and a young woman whom she introduced as "Miss Hazel Cameron."

Kate's first attention was given to Warren Rhett, of course.

"I'm so glad you've come!" she began, "because now I sha'n't be bothered any more, and besides it has been so long since I saw you, and of course there isn't anybody else so nice. Oh, Warren, I'm so glad! You see, even the servants knew how anxious I was to have you here, so as soon as you came three of the chaps came over to Bandonnais to tell me. I was to

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stay overnight there, but as soon as I heard you were at Mannamac I ordered the carriage, and of course Hazel came back with me. I want you to know her, though I think you mustn't fall in love with her, just as you mustn'ted with me ages ago. I wonder if that's right — 'mustn'ted?' It don't sound right, but it's what I mean."

Warren laughingly interrupted, —

"I believe the grammarians contend that the verb 'must,' in all its moods and tenses, has no inflection, but that is no reason why you, Kate, shouldn't give it one if you want to. You're a privileged person, you know."

This seemingly playful interruption was gallantly meant to rescue Hazel Cameron from an embarrassment. When Kate said what she did concerning the possibility of Warren's falling in love with her, and the prohibition, the young woman exclaimed, protestingly, "Oh, Kate!" and immediately hid her face behind her handkerchief. But the action was not quick enough to rob Warren Rhett of a glimpse of her cheeks, which revealed a degree of color not sufficiently accounted for by the glow of a sunset sky that

suffused the porch in which the quartet stood. So Warren Rhett came to the young woman's rescue with his exposition of grammatical requirements. To make the rescue complete, he added:

"Thanks for your cordial welcome of me, Kate, but you haven't half welcomed Danforth. You see when I found you gone away I sent for him, just to console me for your absence, and —"

"Oh, I didn't mean to neglect you, Charley!" she exclaimed, cordially grasping the young man's hand again. "Still, I've a quarrel with you, you know."

"Not a serious one, I hope," he answered.

"Oh, yes, it is. Indeed it's very serious. You haven't been to see me since I don't know when, and I feel myself very greatly aggrieved. Still, now that you're here, I'll forgive you, and we won't talk about that any more. Come, Hazel, these two men are very entertaining, but we mustn't let their ceaseless chatter keep us standing here. Diana has taken our wraps up-stairs, so we must go. Warren, I leave you to entertain Charley."

"I've offered already," Warren replied, "but he tells me he never takes any."

Kate stopped for a moment on the stairs, her brow puckered in puzzlement. Then she understood, and for reply she seemed to toss to Danforth the words:

"Good boy! I like that."

V

HAZEL

SUPPER was served at the usual time — a little before nine o'clock. It was the same supper that had been served in that house every night from "the time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary." There was the cold ham of the razorback variety, for a relish and a stimulant to appetite. There were plates piled high with what the Virginians call "wafer biscuit" — dainty sheets of pastry, as thin as paper itself, baked to a crisp in a hot oven. There was a pan of that most perfect of all combinations of corn-meal, eggs, and cream, known as batter bread. There were berries and other fruits, with tea and coffee, and butter fresh from the churn. There were other things — there were always other things upon the hospitable Virginia table — but in substance the supper consisted of these.

The two young men had hoped for half an hour in the porch in company with the two young women before the supper-hour, but in that they were disappointed. They passed the time before supper, therefore, partly in talking over the situation of Kate's affairs, but still more in arranging to talk it over more thoroughly after the women should have gone to bed.

"I'm here to straighten everything out," young Rhett explained, "and first of all I must know the condition of things as completely as may be. Of course Kate doesn't know anything about it —"

"Of course not," Danforth interrupted, "but I think I can give you all the information you want. Indeed, I should have volunteered my services to Kate long ago if it had been possible. But — you don't know how peculiarly embarrassing my position has been. Did she ever tell you?"

"No. You see, I haven't seen her since her marriage to my father — or since long before that, in fact. But perhaps I can guess."

"No, don't. It would be unfair to her. You see she's peculiar."

"Yes, I know. She's unique in fact. But tell me about it, — that is to say if you care to do so."

"Well, it was this way. She and I were engaged, or at least half-engaged, when — well, when your father decided to marry her. Of course he didn't know that. He was the soul of honor. And Kate didn't tell him. That wouldn't have been her way."

"No," answered Warren, a smile playing over his face. "No, of course not. As you say, Kate is peculiar. But go on, I didn't mean to interrupt."

"Well, one day Kate sent me a letter telling me the engagement must be called off. She explained, in her queer way, that your father had decided to marry her, and that while she was 'awfully sorry,' I would understand that she couldn't help it, and she did hope I wouldn't go and feel bad about it. You can imagine the rest of the letter. It filled twenty-two pages, I remember. Well, of course, knowing Kate as I did, I couldn't blame her as I should have blamed any other woman in the world under like circum-

stances. You know one simply *must* forgive anything and everything to Kate, and go on liking her just as well as ever. To resent anything she does would be like cuffing a baby's ears for smiling at the color of your hair or your cravat. Besides, I don't suppose it ever occurred to her, even as a remote possibility, that she might refuse your father's offer of marriage on the ground that she was already engaged. Her submission to his authority was so absolute that I think it would have been the same if she had been already married. She would have called her marriage off, just as she called off the engagement."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the descent of the gentlewomen from the upper regions and Henry's announcement that supper was ready.

Warren Rhett had his first good look at Hazel Cameron as she entered the supper-room. He had thought her beautiful when he had seen her in the gloaming. Now that the lights fell full upon her, she seemed to him a veritable dream.

She had changed her gown, of course, and she appeared now in a costume that was Greek in its

suggestions and in its simplicity. It was made of gray crêpe de chine. In a sense it was like creation itself — without form and void. That is to say, it had no pronounced lines, and no latitudinal lines at all. There were no flounces and no ruffles, and no waist-line of any kind appeared. The garment seemed to Warren Rhett's masculine apprehension simply to be swathed in graceful spiral curves about the rather tall but not too tall form of the shapely young woman, nowhere asserting itself, nowhere suggesting construction, but flowing as the water flows, and seeming to be a creation of nature rather than of art, or still less of artisanship.

Warren Rhett was pleased with the costume, and he quickly observed that the young woman wore no ornaments of any kind — not even so much as a rose or a ribbon. But his glance at her costume was instantly lost in his glance at her countenance. She was fair, and her creamy white skin had a glint of pink in it that could quickly ripen into red under momentary emotion. Her features were fairly regular, but in confronting her one forgot to observe their regularity because

of the ceaseless play of expression that from moment to moment changed their aspect. As Warren Rhett looked at her, he thought her the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. But the picture she presented seemed to him to lack something — something exceedingly small and inconsequent, and yet something necessary to its perfection. He instantly decided what it was, and as he seated her at table he asked her to excuse him for one moment. Going to the porch, he returned instantly with a spray of honeysuckle — cream-white — and a rose intensely red.

“I want my homecoming to be celebrated,” he said, “with all of beauty that is possible.”

With that he went first to Kate and fastened the red rose in the masses of her raven black hair. Then, with a courteous “permit me,” he advanced to Hazel and entwined the spray of honeysuckle in the copper-colored waves above her forehead. Both the women observed the peculiar dexterity with which he entangled the flowers in the hair. Kate said nothing. Hazel said:

“Evidently you’ve done that before, Mr. Rhett. Your touch tells of practice.”

"Never with results so satisfactory," he said, gallantly, "though I once had the pleasure, in Vera Cruz, of helping to make a beautiful maiden's hair radiant with fireflies, and in the half-lights of the open-air ballroom the effect was impressive. But permit me to say the present effect —"

"We'll permit you nothing," interrupted Kate, who saw the signal reds in Hazel's cheeks. "Speaking of hair, that's why we were delayed in coming down to supper."

"Oh, you got into trouble with your tresses, did you?"

"No. But you know my carriage-horses are white, and they are shedding terribly. So Hazel and I were covered with white horsehairs when we got here. You see, it was so warm, I had the carriage top down. Why, when I looked in the glass, I actually thought I had turned gray over your coming, Warren."

"May I ask, Kate," said Warren, "which one of your servitors is supposed to look after your carriage-horses?"

"Why, Everard, of course."

Young Rhett turned to Hazel and insisted

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upon placing a dainty, paper-thin slice of ham on her plate. Then he quietly secured audience of Henry, and said to him :

“ Send one of the chaps to find Everard, and tell him to come to me here when we have finished supper.”

When the table had been cleared, and the two gentlemen — with permission — had lighted their long-stemmed pipes, Everard presented himself. Rhett looked at him earnestly for a moment. Then he said :

“ The ladies found themselves covered with horsehairs when they got home this evening.”

He added no question to the statement, but Everard understood. He answered :

“ Well, you see, Mister — Mas’ Warren, I mean — de hosses is a sheddin’.”

“ Why ? ”

“ W’y, you know, Mas’ Warren, as well as I do, dat hosses always sheds once a year.”

“ When ? ”

The meagre sententiousness of Rhett’s questioning was a sore affliction to Everard, for the reason that it compelled him to think, and

with him thinking involved a deal of painful effort.

"Well, mostly it happens in de spring," he answered.

"And this is past midsummer," answered the white man. "Horses do not shed in midsummer on any plantation over which I exercise control. If I hear of a horsehair falling upon the clothing of Mrs. Rhett or her guests again — " He paused, not completing the sentence. He knew that Everard would mentally complete it for him, and he was satisfied.

"Henry," he said, "give Everard a dram before he goes."

When the man had gone, Hazel Cameron, who was not a Virginian, turned to Rhett and asked:

"But, Mr. Rhett, how can the poor fellow help it if the horses are shedding out of season?"

Rhett laughed. "He knows how to help it," he said. "He knows that it is a matter of proper or improper grooming. I noticed the horses when the carriage drove up this evening. They haven't been washed down for weeks, and they haven't been properly curried for months. One trouble

is that the bucket of the stable well has fallen to pieces, and Everard has been too indolent either to repair it or to carry water from the house well. There has been dry weather recently, and the rain-water barrels up there have run out. So, in the absence of conscience or energy on Everard's part, the horses have not been washed down as they should have been. As to currying, Everard has neglected that, simply because he didn't want to do any more work than he must. Like everybody else on this plantation, he has fallen into bad habits. Why, even Henry here hasn't yet cleaned the muddy boots I took off a good many hours ago."

Henry fairly shrank into himself with mortification. But Henry still had some remains of a conscience, and Rhett knew that with him, at least, repentance was likely to bring forth "fruits meet." Henry was washing the supper dishes, while his mistress, Kate, was scalding and drying them, after the immemorial custom of Virginia housewives. He was far too well-bred to make any reply to his master's remark, but he looked at Warren in a way which that young gentleman

rightly interpreted to mean: " I beg yo' pardon, Mas' Warren, an' you may be sartin' sure it won't happen never again no more ! "

Warren nodded in answer to the look, and presently the negro, having finished with the dishes, hurried — yes, actually hurried — to find those boots and put them in order. He was sincerely resolved that his young " Mas' Warren " should have no further occasion to complain of neglect on his part.

VI

A LOVE - SONG IN THE PORCH

THE housewifely duties done, Kate suggested a migration of the company to the drawing-room.

"There's a moon nearly full," answered Rhett, "and the thermometer stands at seventy-two. Why not sit out in the porch? You know, Miss Cameron, there are no mosquitoes at Mannamac."

The suggestion met with general approval, and the party moved out into the great front porch.

"May I ask you a wholly impertinent question, Mr. Rhett?" queried Hazel, as he led her off the porch to show her a well-remembered moonlight effect of leaf shadows upon the paved walk.

"Ask any question you please," he answered. "I shall not consider it impertinent."

“ Then how came you to know that the thermometer stood at seventy-two? ”

He laughed.

“ Oh, that’s simple enough. You see, I’m an engineer and a contractor for construction work, and it is often necessary that I shall know the temperature. Methods and materials often depend upon that. So I always carry in my pocket a little thermometer, enclosed in a safety case that I had made for the purpose of protecting it and keeping it always handy. When you and Kate arrived I began to plan for an altogether pleasant evening. The weather was clear, and I knew we should have a fine moon, so I wanted to know whether or not we might sit outside and enjoy the weather conditions. To that end I removed the little thermometer from its case and set it on the railing of the porch. When I went out to get the flowers you and Kate are wearing, I struck a match and looked at the instrument. There, that is a complete resolution of the mystery of Warren Rhett’s extraordinary sagacity and prescience and all the rest of it. It’s as simple as the explanation of a ghost-story usually is.”

"Now you are laughing at me," she answered, "but —"

"No, I'm not laughing at you. I feel no disposition to do that. It was very natural that you should wonder how I knew the state of the thermometer, when seemingly I had had no opportunity to observe it. But as I offered the perfectly simple explanation, it occurred to me that most of the mysteries that make men's and women's eyes saucer-like with wonder are equally easy of explanation if one only knows the facts."

"Then you don't believe in the existence of mysteries?"

"Oh, yes, I do. Nothing in all the world is so borne in upon me as mystery. There's the attraction of gravitation, for example. I have to wrestle with it and reckon with it every hour of every day. Practically, I can deal with it. That is to say, I can recognize it and accommodate myself to its inexorable demands — but to say that I understand it — no. I know not what it is, or whence it comes, or why it acts in the way it does. I can convert it into heat by arresting its

manifestation. I can tame it to my uses and make it turn wheels for me. I can in that way convert it into light, electricity, or sound, — I can make it rock a cradle or crush a casemate,— gently crack a nut or mash a mass of cold iron into such shape as I desire, making it white-hot in the process. But I no more know what that limitless force is, or whence it comes, or whither it goes, than does any new-born babe. And there is another of the multitudinous mysteries that surround us. How does the new-born babe, by the assimilation of food, particle by particle, atom by atom, molecule by molecule, build up its body and brain into a prize-fighter or a poet or a student or a statesman? If I plant two seeds in the earth, each inconsequent in size and structure, how is it that the one will with certainty produce a deliciously edible fruit, and the other a noxious one of totally different character and appearance? The soil from which the two are nourished is the same, the air in which the two grow is the same — all the conditions are absolutely identical. Yet the one seed with certainty converts the materials accessible to it into one

thing, and the other, with equal certainty, converts the same materials into another. Again, see here." He took a penknife out of his pocket. "The force that holds the particles of one of those steel blades together is sufficient to destroy a city or a fleet of battle-ships instantly, if it could be released suddenly. Whence comes that terrific force? What holds it to its duty of maintaining the integrity of the steel, instead of permitting its particles to resolve themselves into an expansive gas, and blow everything around into atoms? I have frequent occasion to employ high explosives. They are simply substances in which the bond of union between the particles is so weak that a trifling heat or a slight jar destroys that bond instantaneously. Why is it that in some substances the bond of union is so weak, while in others it is so incalculably strong? I do not know. Neither does anybody else. These, and things like these, are the mysteries of nature. We pretend to explain them by classifying and naming the phenomena, but our explanations do not explain. If I were to talk all night and all day, and all the nights and all the days of my life,

I could not begin to catalogue the mysteries that my mind must encounter every day. These things constitute the riddle of the universe, and the universe is a sphinx whose mysteries no mortal may even pretend to understand. Be careful! There's a break in the step there. I have given orders to have it repaired."

Before the girl could thank him for the caution, Kate called to her, saying:

"Come, Hazel, Mr. Danforth wants to hear you sing, and I'll give you a guitar accompaniment, so that we needn't quit the porch for the drawing-room."

Then Kate, the incorrigible chatterer, rattled on, after her wont.

"Anyhow, it isn't fair for you and Warren to stand talking out there in the moonlight, leaving poor Charley to me — who don't know how to talk at all, except just in a commonplace way. What have you two been talking about, anyhow? It's too soon for Warren to have fallen in love with you, Hazel, even in such moonlight as this, so you must have been talking philosophy or something else that Charley and I don't understand.

Come and be sociable and sing. You know, Warren, Hazel is a genius who can do everything — ”

“ Will you be quiet, Kate? ” exclaimed the girl, with nervous dread of more to come.

“ That means I’m to shut up, I suppose. Very well, I will — but it’s all true, Warren. I’ll tell you about it some other time. What will you sing, Hazel? ”

“ Anything that is honest and sincere, ” answered the girl. “ Let it be ‘ Home, Sweet Home ’ first, just by way of a welcome to Mr. Rhett. ”

One song followed another, there in the moonlight, Hazel singing in a voice that Warren — who was not an unskilled critic — thought one of the sweetest and most sympathetic he had ever heard.

After awhile the singing seemed to come to an end of its own accord, and the little company, still under its spell, sat well-nigh silent for a time — speaking only a word now and then. After a little while, Hazel, as if moved by a sudden impulse, took the guitar from Kate’s lap and, accompanying herself, sang this :

A LOVE-SONG IN THE PORCH 89

" Love is the life of the life that we live —

Yes, Love is the sum of it all ;

It is not what we get, and it's not what we
give —

Not what we bestow, nor what we receive,

That makes up the sum of it all ;

It's loving — loving — loving !

" It's not what we think of, nor what we forget,

That makes up the sum of it all ; —

Not what we rejoice in, — not what we regret —

Not the things that delight us, nor those that beset, —

That make up the sum of it all ; —

It's loving — loving — loving !

" The mother who croons o'er her baby asleep,

Knows Love as the sum of it all ;

Over other things she may rejoice or may weep,

But into her soul doubt never can creep

That Love is the sum of it all —

That it's loving — loving — loving.

" And so the world over the truth is the same —

That Love is the sum of it all ;

It's so with the maiden and so with the dame,

With the youth and the sage — whatever the
name —

That Love is the sum of it all —

That it's loving — loving — loving ! "

90 LOVE IS THE SUM OF IT ALL

This was the rather unusual melody to which she sang the song.

Moderato.

The musical score is written for piano and features two systems of staves. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef, and a single treble staff above it. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The tempo is marked *Moderato.*

The first system begins with a treble staff containing two whole rests. The piano part starts with a melody in the bass clef, marked *p* (piano). The upper treble staff enters with a melody marked *cres. . . .* (crescendo). The piano part continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

The second system also begins with a treble staff containing two whole rests. The piano part continues its melody, marked *p*. The upper treble staff enters with a melody marked *cres.* (crescendo), which then transitions to *dim.* (diminuendo). The piano part continues with its accompaniment.

A LOVE-SONG IN THE PORCH 91

Love is the life of the life that we live,— Yes,

p

Love is the sum of it all; It's

rall.

not what we get, and it's not what we give,— Not

mf *cres.*

92 LOVE IS THE SUM OF IT ALL

what we be - stow, nor yet what we re - ceive,—That

makes up the sum of it all: It's

f *p*

D.S.

lov - ing, lov - ing, lov - ing!

pp *ppp* *8va* *D.S.*

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a song titled "Love is the Sum of it All". The score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with dynamic markings *f* and *p*. The third system features a vocal line with the lyrics "lov - ing, lov - ing, lov - ing!" and a piano accompaniment with dynamic markings *pp*, *ppp*, and *8va*. The score ends with a double bar line and the marking *D.S.* (Da Capo).

As she sang, Rhett rose from his chair and listened with an eagerness of attention far greater than that which listeners usually give to any song. When she had finished, he asked :

“Where did you get that?”

“I got the words out of an old magazine, where they were published over your name, Mr. Rhett. I did not know then who you were, and I certainly did not imagine that I should ever meet you. But the song seemed to me to express a truth, and the rhythm pleased me. I wanted to sing it, so I wrote the little melody myself. Tell me about the words, please. May I know what prompted you to write them?”

“It is very strange,” he said; “very strange that the thing should come back to me in this way.” He paused before offering the explanation — paused as if recalling. At last he said :

“I have never been in the habit of writing verse. But this thought came to me under peculiar circumstances, and it seemed to demand expression in words. The words took metrical form almost in spite of me — certainly not of my will.”

“But why did the thought come to you? Thoughts are always the result of suggestion, are they not?”

“I do not know. I never questioned as to that,” he answered; “but in this case, as I see clearly now, the thought was obviously born of suggestion and circumstance. But it is not always a single suggestion or a single circumstance that gives birth to thought. Perhaps it is not always an objective fact at all that serves as a suggestion. In this case I think there were both objective and subjective influences at work. Let me tell you the story, and leave you to judge for yourself.

“As I recall the circumstances, I was at the time engaged in construction work up in the Peruvian Cordilleras. I was utterly without human companionship of any kind — as completely alone as if I had been the only human being there. Around me there dwelt no one with whom I could exchange even the most commonplace thought — no one to whom I could say even that it was a fine morning, with any hope of a response. The men working under my command — there were two

thousand of them — were Chinese coolies, Mexican peons, convicts condemned to the service as a punishment for crime — the dregs and lees of humanity, the offscourings, the refuse, of civilization and semicivilization.

“In brief, I had absolutely no possibility of human comradeship about me, and if I looked afar, with the eyes of the spirit, the landscape there seemed equally barren. I had neither father nor mother, neither wife nor sweetheart, neither brother nor sister. In all the world, whose vastness and remoteness was borne in upon me by the mountain solitudes, there was nowhere any human being to whom I was of anything more than passing consequence. If I should die there in the Cordilleras, they would bury my body, precisely as they would bury that of a defunct mule — to get it out of the way. After a month or two — perhaps after six months — one of those remotely residing persons whom I had been accustomed to call my friends would accidentally hear of my death, and say, ‘Poor fellow! Yes, I remember him well.’

“You will say that all this was morbid, and

perhaps it was. But I doubt that any man of character, any man possessed of an imagination, could have escaped morbidity under the circumstances. However that may be, I didn't escape it. I was making money lavishly — almost absurdly it seemed to me. The men who had sent me there to do their work had known something of the human sacrifice that its doing involved, and they had multiplied the temptation of dollars, until the monthly arrival of my salary by caravan made me laugh at the absurdity of it all.

“The dollars came to me in bags, carried by pack-mules. I foresaw that I must hire a caravan to carry the accumulated and accumulating pile back to the coast when the work should be done. But what could I do with it up there in the mountains? I could buy a few eggs, some grapes, some sweet potatoes, and some onions of a native woman who lived near, and that was all.

“Day after day the question more and more insistently pressed itself upon my mind, whether the game was worth the candle — whether the lavish sums I was receiving for my skill and my

work, or whether ten times or a hundred times those sums, could compensate a man of intelligence for the utter isolation the work involved — the utter loss of all human sympathy and kindness — the loss of love in all its forms. While I was in this questioning mood of mind I went one morning to the hut of the native woman from whom I was accustomed to buy eggs and grapes and onions and the like. As I approached her hut she was crooning her baby to sleep, and although I was her best — almost her only customer who had money with which to pay — she lifted her free hand and beckoned me to go away — all in behalf of the sleeping child. There was mother love, dominating need and greed alike, and its manifestation set me thinking. I wrote the verses you have just sung. I sent them by the monthly mail to a friend in New York. I never heard from them again, or thought of them again. You will readily understand the surprise and the interest I felt when I heard you sing them.”

At this point Kate interposed with the ejaculation: “Poor fellow, I suppose you couldn’t

even get your laundry work done decently in that out-of-the-way place!"

It was fortunate that she did so, for it is doubtful that Hazel, who had been greatly moved by the story, could have made any answer at all on the instant. The interruption gave her a chance to recover, and presently she said:

"It is very, very interesting, but, Kate, you are yawning surreptitiously. Don't you think we'd better bid the gentlemen good night?"

Kate assenting, the two women withdrew from the porch and were courteously escorted to the foot of the stairs. There the good nights were said, but as the feminine pair mounted the stairs Rhett called out:

"I suppose breakfast is served at nine o'clock, as of old, Kate?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, if I shouldn't be present on time, won't you please excuse me, and go on without me? I bought the most beautiful young mare to-day that anybody ever saw, and I'm going to break her in the morning. When I get her under con-

A LOVE-SONG IN THE PORCH 99

trol I shall give her a ten or fifteen mile ride, just
to impress it upon her mind that I'm her master.
So I may not get back in time for breakfast,
though I'll try."

VII

A PACT AND A PRINCIPLE

THE two young men sat up most of the night studying Kate's affairs and the condition into which she had got them by her incapacity to understand business. The details need not be set forth here. The conclusion was a compact between the two men to "straighten them out somehow."

It was fortunate, as both of them recognized, that Kate's interest in the plantation was only for life, and that therefore no claim against her could become a lien upon anything except personal property.

"But let me tell you, Charley," said Warren Rhett, after the situation had been pretty well worked out, "that I don't intend to have Kate bothered in this way. She's my father's widow, and she is only carrying on things as he taught her to carry them on. The only trouble is that

she doesn't know how to make the plantation yield a revenue equal to her expenditures. Neither did my father, but I think I do. At any rate, I'm going to study the subject and try. I'm condemned by my doctors to at least a year's idleness, and I don't know where I could idle so pleasantly as here at Mannamac. So I'm going to see what can be done to make a Virginia plantation pay as great a revenue under the new conditions as it did under the old. I think it can be done. If not, then at any rate my own business is well organized and it will go on paying largely. Anyhow, I have enough to the good to take care of Kate and her affairs. She simply shall not be compelled, either to change her way of living, or to submit to humiliation because of it."

"I applaud your sentiment," answered the other, "and I so far sympathize with it that you may count upon me for any help I can render you in carrying out your programme."

"Well, now, may I?" eagerly questioned Rhett. "You see I don't know any other lawyer in the county, and, as I understand, you are already engaged on the other side in cases against

her. I don't know your confounded professional ethics or etiquette or whatever you call it, and I don't care a continental about it. What I want is your help in taking care of Kate — ”

“ That you shall have with a right good-will,” answered Danforth.

“ All right then,” responded Rhett. “ So far as I can see, the claims against her amount only to two or three thousand dollars — ”

“ Less than half that, if you deduct those that have already been satisfied by levies and otherwise,” interposed Danforth.

“ So much the better. Now I am prepared, personally, not only to assume responsibility for every claim against her, but instantly to discharge every just claim by my draft on New York, the moment you say it is just and correct. If there are any unjust claims — and there often are in such cases — we'll fight them to a finish in the courts, even if it costs me ten times their amount. You see when there's only a woman to deal with — ”

“ I know,” interrupted Danforth; “ and you are quite right. Every rascal in the community

has sought an opportunity to take advantage of the situation in this case, and they have hired shysters to help them. It was for that reason alone that I ever took cases against her — just to prevent the shysters from persecuting her. By the way, that reminds me of something. You know Kate is fond of riding horseback, and she had two favorite nags, Patty, a palfrey of excellent quality, and Ingomar, a superb horse fit for severe work. Well, I simply had to take both of them last week, under an execution, in order to prevent that reprobate Jack Wood, who also had a judgment, from doing so. I took the animals and had them sold by the sheriff. I didn't want Kate to lose them, and as I had heard that you were probably coming down here, I bought them in, myself, thinking that if you came we could so arrange that she should have the horses back again as your property, without danger of anybody levying upon them. Now that you're here, I'll give *you* a bill of sale for them, and I'll send them back to Kate's stables to-morrow."

"That is very generous, and therefore it is

in character, Charley. But can you really afford to do it? I ask frankly."

"And I answer frankly, yes. You know I am unmarried; I have nobody dependent upon me; I have a fairly lucrative practice, and I owe no man anything but good-will, except perhaps a few dollars to Levy, the storekeeper, for a box or two of cigars."

"Then you smoke cigars?"

"No, of course not. I'm a Virginian. I smoke a pipe. I give the cigars to my friends — and especially to my enemies."

"Very well. Send the horses back. But bear in mind, you and I personally divide the loss. I insist upon that. For the rest, I want you, if you are free to do so, to become my counsel while I am settling Kate's affairs. To your own clients who have claims against her, you can say that I assume all her just obligations and stand ready to pay them. To all others, say what your learning in the law suggests, and I'll stand by it."

"There'll be some fights, I think."

"Well, we'll make the fights. I say to you now that I won't have Kate robbed or wronged, and

the rascals may as well understand the matter in that way at the outset. I'll pay every claim that you decide to be just, but I want you to fight every unjust claim to the utmost limit of the law, even if it costs ten times the amount involved."

"You're a born fighter, aren't you, Warren? — predestined to that, as the Presbyterians say."

"I don't know. I have a conviction that right is right and wrong wrong, and — well, I suppose it is instinctive in a gentleman to fight wrong, precisely as we fight fire or smallpox, because wrong is a public enemy, just as fire and pestilence are."

He paused a moment reflecting. Then he said :

"Of course, when the fight comes, I have a certain joy in it. How can a fellow help that? I like to trample upon wrong, and crush it under my feet."

"Yes, I understand. You weren't born to be a lawyer. You were born to be a great, big, strong *man* instead, — a man who would scorn to defend wrong or to enforce it against right, in consideration of a fee. I tell you frankly, Warren, that I detest my own profession — I loath it — I

abhor it. It requires of those who would successfully practise it a complete surrender of manhood, an absolute abnegation of conscience, a slavish subservience to the client for pay. The lawyer who hopes for success must stand ready to take a retainer on either side of any case, wholly regardless of the merits of the case. What would you think of a newspaper that accepted retainers in that way, standing ready, for pay, to advocate either side of any question? And having accepted a retainer for the wrong, the lawyer must maintain the pretence of believing that the wrong is the right; he must stultify himself by insisting upon misinterpretations of the law. He must employ all the ingenuity of mind that he possesses, to secure the triumph of the wrong over the right. He must sacrifice his very soul for his client. He must make himself *particeps criminis* in fact, if not in legal definition, every day of his life. He must dicker and deal. He must quibble and quirk. He is a man with a 'to let' sign on his conscience, a man whose brains are for hire to the highest bidder — an intellectual hireling and a moral prostitute."

"That is an awful indictment of your own profession, Charley."

"Awful? Yes. And the awfulest thing about it is that it is all true. The clients who stand ready to pay best and to give the largest employment to a lawyer are precisely those who want wrong done, rascality defended, and criminality saved from its legitimate punishment."

Warren Rhett paced the floor backwards and forwards half a dozen times before he answered. Then he approached his friend and, taking his hand, said:

"I sympathize with you, old fellow. What do you intend to do?"

"Thank you for the sympathy. I am going to obey the dictates of a conscience that is still reasonably clean. I have decided that hereafter I will take no case that I do not believe to be just and right, and that after I have taken a case I will resolutely refuse to do anything in my client's behalf which I do not believe to be just and right. If my clients want something else done, they must employ another lawyer. For the rest there is a good deal of entirely honest work for a lawyer

to do, in verifying land titles, in framing contracts, in administering estates, in the prosecution of honest claims and in defence against dishonest ones, — these things I may do as an honorable man and maintain my self-respect. If I can make a living in such a practice of law, I shall be content. If not, then I shall do something else. I'll keep myself clean, anyhow. Perhaps I shall ask you for a place as timekeeper, or whatever else you call the man who makes record of the hours at which your workmen begin and quit work."

"All right, I'll give you a place whenever you want it, which will be two days after never. Why, don't you understand, you sublimated idiot, that if you conduct your law practice on the lines you have indicated, it is bound to become the greatest and most successful law practice in this part of the State? Don't you see that when once it becomes known that you won't take a case till you are convinced of its righteousness, and that you won't do or ask anything in behalf of a client till you are satisfied that it is right and just — don't you see that when you shall have built up

that kind of reputation, every man who has a case in court will eagerly strive to secure your services? Don't you see that the very fact of your appearance in behalf of a client will carry weight with judge and jury alike? And if it doesn't, what matter? What is commonly called 'success' is often the worst of all possible failures. You may not make money as rapidly as the rascals do, — though I'm not so sure of that, — but, at any rate, you'll enjoy the respect of Charles Danforth and of Charles Danforth's fellow citizens — and that is a good deal better than money. Some day perhaps they will make you a judge of our highest court — if they don't it will be a mistake on the people's part. But whether that comes to you or not as a reward, you will know, and everybody else will know, that Charles Danforth is an honest man and a lawyer with a conscience.

“I tell you, old fellow, there are sounder ways of looking at these things than those that are common among men. I was speaking to-night of a time in my life when I was receiving the very highest pay I ever received, and when I felt that I was getting less out of life than every man has

a right to expect and to exact. My 'pay' came to me in bags of silver dollars. I had to send them back to the coast again by the selfsame pack-mules that had toilsomely 'toted' them up through the mountain passes. At the coast town they were converted into paper — drafts on New York — and in New York they were converted into figures on the pages of a bank's ledgers. Meanwhile, I couldn't spend a dollar of it all for anything that I wanted in the world. I wanted companionship. Not the wealth of Croesus could have purchased it for me up there in the desolate mountains. I would gladly have given a thousand of the silver dollars that uselessly lay there in my tent, awaiting transportation, to hear a plantation darkey strum upon the banjo or sing absurd ditties in a huskily false voice. I would gladly have given other thousands of those dollars just to hear the sound of human laughter — for the peons and the coolies never laugh. They have never had occasion to learn that art — and I could not hear laughter at any price. I would gladly have paid out thousands of those useless dollars for the privilege of passing a scant half-hour in

the company of a dozen barroom loafers, simply in order that I might hear human beings talk again of the things that interested them, however unworthy those things might be in themselves.

“When I thus fully realized how worthless money is when it will not buy those things that its possessor wants, I began to understand that money is merely a tool, just as a wheelbarrow or a crowbar or a chisel is — an implement with which to work when you have the materials to work upon. Except as a tool it is the most valueless thing in all this world, and the saddest men on earth ought to be those who have spent their lives in accumulating it. I can imagine nothing else so tragical as the death of a man who has devoted his life to mere accumulation.

“However that may be, I think you have chosen not only the wiser, but the manlier part. There is plenty of good, honest work for a lawyer, embarrassed by a conscience, to do, and the doing of it will bring him a success superior to that which awaits his fellow of more elastic views of human obligations. Anyhow, life means something more than lucre, and to win the affection of

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your fellow men and women is of far greater consequence than to win the pecuniary rewards of their confidence in your skill and acumen. For it is true that 'Love is the sum of it all.' Good night, old fellow. Sleep well, and jealously cherish your high ideals of manhood!"

VIII

THE EVENTS OF A MORNING

WHEN Warren Rhett got out of bed at daybreak next morning, he found his cold bath awaiting him. Henry had not forgotten the existence of what he could not help regarding as a species of insanity on his young master's part — the desire, namely, to get into a tub of cold water upon waking in the morning. Henry was a servant of generous mind, disposed to tolerate, if he could not approve, the idiosyncrasies of the man he served. There was nothing of the propagandist or missionary spirit in Henry, and so he made no attempt to convert his master to his own view, that baths are evils to be avoided on general principles, and that cold baths, especially in the early morning, are "somethin' that no sensible person would ever submit to on no account what-

somewer." He pardoned his master's imbecility, and provided the hat-shaped bath-tub with the cold water that his "Mas' Warren" desired.

It was not yet sunrise when young Rhett tiptoed down the stairs in an effort to avoid waking the sleepers, and passed out into the glorious morning.

In the grounds he stumbled as it were upon Hazel Cameron, who had set up an easel there, but was apparently doing nothing. He greeted her cordially and expressed his delighted surprise that painting was one of her accomplishments.

"Oh, it isn't an accomplishment," she answered. "It's my trade, you know. I make my living by it."

Then, as if to forestall comments and compliments, she hastily added :

"But I must give this picture up. A week ago, I began to paint a picture which I intended to call 'The Broken Fence.' I came out this morning to work upon it, but somebody has removed the fence, so that I cannot go on."

"I fear I'm the guilty person," he said. "I didn't imagine there ever could be any use for

that fence. But if I may I will have it restored this morning — breaks and all.”

“Certainly not,” she answered. “I can understand that from the point of view of an engineer, whose habit it is to have things shipshape, that fence was an eyesore. Besides, you couldn’t restore it as it was. The restoration would look ‘fixed up’ — artificial, unreal.”

“Then I have robbed you of a picture.”

“Yes, in a way. But it wouldn’t have been much of a picture at best, and you can easily replace the loss, if you will.”

“I will, if you’ll tell me how.”

“Let me go with you to the stables and see you conquer the beautiful mare you mentioned last night. You see, horses are what I mostly paint, and I specially like to paint them in vigorous action. I should like to see the contest between you and the mare.”

He paused a moment in reflection. Then he said:

“You may, if you don’t mind going up into the stable loft and sitting at the opening of the haymow while you look. I should be afraid to

have you anywhere below, as I suppose the mare is really demoniacal. They tell me so, and she looks the part."

"I'll be very good," she said.

"Very well, come on."

"I doubt if you find as much trouble with the mare as you expect," she said, as they walked toward the stables — a quarter of a mile away.

"Why?"

"Well, for one thing I think you know, better than the people that have handled her, how to deal with her. I have always observed that a man of sense — but that isn't what I was really thinking of. You have a peculiarly commanding manner. I observed it when you were disciplining that negro man last night. You didn't scold, and you didn't threaten, and you didn't bluster. You quietly told him what you required of him, but somehow you did it in a way that made it impossible for him to do otherwise than as you said. I think some men are born with the gift of command, and such men secure obedience almost without effort. I have noticed, too, that such men

are obeyed by animals just as they are obeyed by men — simply as a matter of course.”

The two walked on side by side, he making no reply. As they reached the stables he faced her and said:

“I hope you will not misunderstand me. I suppose my manner is sometimes arrogantly dictatorial. It is a manner that in part I inherited from my father, I suppose, but in far greater part it has been acquired. You see, in the conduct of my business I must not only be master — I must be masterful. I am set to command men in large numbers, and they are mostly inferior men. They have been used to obey the sharp word of command, so that obedience to the sharp word has become habitual with them, while their disposition to revolt and to refuse obedience is so strong that they would yield to it eagerly if they could, even to the extent of slaying the man who controls them, if they dared. In the remote mountain regions of South America I have had as many as two thousand Chinese coolies under my command. Not a man among them had any interest in life except to shirk work and eat and

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drink in idleness. There wasn't so much as a rudimentary conscience in all that company. There wasn't a creature in the crowd who would have hesitated, upon any moral ground, to kill me and take possession of the food supplies that I had in charge. The only reason they didn't do that was that they feared me. Why, I know not. There were two thousand of them to one of me, and of course in any physical contest with them I should have been immeasurably helpless. As for moral suasion in the ordinary sense, it was wholly out of the question. There was no moral sense in any of their minds to appeal to, no perception of right and wrong, no glimmering notion of a difference between the two. But these men were used to obey the word of command spoken by their master. If he had spoken haltingly, or with hesitation, or with any suggestion of doubt as to their obedience, they would have buried him that day, or more probably they would have thrown his corpse to the condors, while they took possession of the food stores. I hope you do not think it unpardonable that under such circumstances I acquired a peremptoriness of

speech and manner which seems to you offensive."

"Oh, but it isn't offensive. It is lovely. You are the kind of man who has a right — I mean — well, I mean you don't assume — you don't command except when you have a right to command."

What the girl really meant was that Warren Rhett was entitled to command, simply by virtue of what she deemed his personal superiority, and she narrowly missed saying something of the sort. By way of escape she said:

"I think the mare will recognize your authority as soon as she understands that you intend her no harm."

Her prediction was fulfilled. There was a bad quarter of an hour of controversy between Rhett and the powerful animal, but at the end of that time the mare had learned two things — that this man was her master, and that he was altogether a friendly master, who meant no harm to her.

When her subjection was complete, Rhett bade the young woman adieu and rode away to inspect

the beginning of the plantation work he had ordered the day before.

Once yielded, the mare's submission was so complete that Rhett did not think it necessary to give her the discipline of a long ride, as he had intended. He deemed it enough to ride her to the several points on the plantation where he had ordered work begun, and so he returned to the house in time for the nine o'clock breakfast, for which he had an appreciative appetite.

"I suppose you have enjoyed your ride, Warren," said Kate, as she poured his coffee.

"Intensely — but selfishly. To-morrow morning I hope I shall have you and Miss Cameron for company."

"But we haven't any horses, Warren. You know they've taken them all away."

"That was only for a time," he answered, "and only to save them from the clutches of Jack Wood. Charley Danforth here has them safe in his stable, and he's going to send them back here to-day. He has so fixed it that nobody can ever take them away again."

"Thank you ever so much, Charley," said the

inconsequent Kate. "Of course I could have bought some other riding-horses, and I was planning to do so. But it wouldn't have been just the same as having Patty and Ingomar."

Neither of the young men had expected Kate to understand, and therefore neither of them was astonished by her speech. But it wasn't easy for either of them to know what to say in reply. After a moment of hesitation, Warren said:

"I'm sorry you didn't keep the hounds, Kate. I need them very much just now."

"Well, you see there wasn't any gentleman on the plantation to use them, and I didn't know when you were coming back, so I thought I might as well give them away. But if you really want to go fox-hunting, I think I could borrow them back from Mr. Talcott."

"My dear Kate, we don't go fox-hunting at midsummer, with the tobacco uncut, and the corn and wheat standing."

"Then what did you want the hounds for?"

"Oh, only to run down your business affairs. Charley and I worked nearly all night over them,

and we haven't even yet run some of them to cover."

"Oh, I'm so sorry you didn't tell me. I'd have sent you the coffee urn and some sandwiches. But how could the dogs have helped you?"

"I'm afraid I can't explain, but I'd like another cup of your delicious coffee, if you please."

After a little he asked:

"Have you any papers anywhere, Kate — receipts, bills, business letters, or anything of that sort? If you have, perhaps you'd better turn them over to Charley, so that he and I can sort them out and arrange them."

"Oh, yes, I have almost a trunk full. Your father taught me always to keep business papers, and I've always done it. I put them all in a trunk up in the attic. I'll have it brought down after breakfast, but I give you warning you mustn't ask me anything about any of them, for I never read one of them in my life. I'm so glad you and Charley are going to take charge of them. You see a woman really isn't fit for that sort of thing."

"Oh, yes, — I see that clearly," answered the

young man. Then he turned to Hazel Cameron, and asked :

“ When do you want Dolly Varden — my mare — to give you a sitting? ”

IX

A DWARFED MORNING - GLORY

AFTER breakfast, Rhett and Danforth devoted two or three hours to a careful examination of Kate's business papers. Some of them were advertisements. Some were bills — mostly unpaid. Some were "statements of account" from Skene & Somers, the commission merchants in Richmond to whom, annually, the tobacco and wheat and other products of the plantation had been sent for sale, and through whom orders had been given for supplies. These statements of account covered the entire period that had elapsed since the death of Warren Rhett's father, and they showed an annually increasing indebtedness of the plantation to the merchants who handled its products.

"Those fellows have been very decent, don't you think?" said Danforth, after the two had worked out the problem.

"Yes —" answered Rhett, with a note as of meditation in his utterance. "Yes — very decent indeed. Skene & Somers have certainly been very lenient. I wonder if —"

He paused in his speech, and the other took it up.

"You wonder if Somers hasn't been hoping to marry Kate? The little whelp, it would be just like him. Miserable little manikin that he is, five feet two in height and weighing not more than a hundred and ten pounds, he has the assurance —"

"Come, Charley, don't let your jealousy get the better of your judgment. There is not the smallest danger that a woman like Kate will ever seriously entertain the suit of a man like Somers. In the meanwhile, Skene & Somers have certainly behaved very well toward Kate. Let us figure up just what her indebtedness to them is, and I'll draw a check for the amount and discharge it. Then I'll look out for some other com-

mission house to handle the products of Mannamac plantation."

"But why should you do that, if you think they have behaved so well? Are you jealous, too?"

"Not in the least," laughed the other. "I'm immune on that score, as you will readily see when you reflect that Kate was my father's wife. But I don't intend to leave the plantation's affairs in the hands of any but alert business men. Skene & Somers are not good business men — otherwise they would never have left things at loose ends as they have done. They would at the very least have required that Kate should give them her note for the money due them. No, I thank them sincerely for their lenity to Kate, but I shall certainly not do business with men so negligent. They'll 'go broke' some fine morning, and it might happen that they should owe Mannamac the entire proceeds of a year's crop at the time."

At that moment Hazel Cameron came down the stairway into the great entrance-hall where the two men sat.

"Pardon me," she said, shrinking back as if



“PARDON ME, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU GENTLEMEN WERE STILL
AT WORK HERE.” — *Page 126.*

in retreat. "I didn't know you gentlemen were still at work here. I'll go to the garden."

"Indeed you shall not," answered Rhett. "Or at any rate you shall not go alone. I haven't inspected the garden as yet, and if I may I will go with you. After that, you and I will go to the stables and I'll make Dolly pose for you. You see, I must get her used to me, and this will be a good opportunity. Henry will order your horse for you, Charley, when you get ready to go. And, Henry, as soon as Mr. Danforth closes and locks that trunk, I want you to have a man take it over to the Court-House in a cart, and deliver it at his office. See to it at once, do you hear? You'll be back to-night, Charley? Then ta ta — so long — and all the rest of the partings. Come as early as you can, and be sure to be here before supper, or Kate will be distressed."

With that he gently took Hazel's elbow in his hand and piloted her to the garden.

The walks there were a good deal grass grown, and no bed in all that acre of highly fertilized land had been properly weeded. The glass of the cold frames was broken in many places but

that could wait, as the cold frames were needed only in the spring, and the paling fence that surrounded the enclosure, and was intended to keep the hares out, was in many places out of repair.

Rhett took in the situation at a glance, but for the moment he said nothing. Instead he went to some rose-bushes and gathered a handful of American beauties, which he presented to Hazel. Then he called to the head gardener, who was not far away, and when the negro came to him he spoke with him in an entirely unemotional voice.

"Your garden is in very bad shape," he said. "Would you mind telling me why?"

"Well, sir, you see I've a little short o' help in de gyarden."

"How many assistants have you?"

"Four; but one on 'em's only a boy."

"And the garden covers a little less than an acre? Four men and a boy, cultivating so small a space, ought not to leave a weed in existence. Call your assistants and set them at work at once on those beds" — pointing.

"But I can't call 'em now, Mas' Warren." It

was the first time the negro had lapsed into the old form of address.

“ Why not? Have you lost your voice? ”

“ No, sir, but you see, sir — ”

“ Oh, yes, I see, clearly enough. I see weeds everywhere and the grossest kind of neglect. Call your assistants at once.”

“ But I can’t, Mas’ Warren. You see dey’s a succus ” — the man meant circus — “ over at de Court-House, an’ all de boys is gone to see it.”

“ Oh, indeed? How happens it that you are not there, too? ”

“ Well, you see, Mis’ Kate, she done sot me a job to do this morning, an’ so I made up my min’ not to go till ’twas time to go into de tent. Dat’ll be long ’bout two o’clock.”

“ Oh, I see,” answered Rhett, still speaking in the level and unimpassioned voice that had been his from the first. “ So you are going to the Court-House to see the circus, too, and your assistants went early this morning to make a day of it. Have any of you asked permission of your Mis’ Kate? ”

“ W’y, no, of course not, Mas’ Warren. Since

we's been sot free we don't have to ask no permission."

"Oh, you don't? Then you are a good deal freer than any white man is, who works for wages. Miss Cameron, here is something that will interest you. It is a dwarf morning-glory — *convolvulus major*, you know — and the history of it is peculiar. When I was a boy here at Mannamac, I sowed some morning-glory seeds in a bed of barren gravel, where I wanted to cover up some ugliness. They sprouted, but the vines reached only an inch or two or perhaps three in height, and they bore diminutive flowers, like these — not over a quarter of an inch in their greatest dimension. They made seed, however, and I sowed the seed here in good soil. It produced the dwarf flowers again, to my astonishment, and obviously, it is producing them still. Don't you think it is very interesting?"

"Perhaps the dwarf form is natural to the plant," she answered, conjecturally. "Perhaps it has been brought into larger form only by cultivation, and has seized upon an opportunity to revert."

"I thought of that, but it isn't the right answer. You see the morning-glory grows wild all over the South. In Mississippi it is one of the most prolific of the weeds that fret the cotton-fields. It is beneficent in its way. It covers every old stump and converts every neglected rail pile into an object of beauty. But it tries to clamber over all the cotton-plants as well, choking them to death, and its suppression involves a world of labor. But everywhere, in its wild state, the morning-glory bears full-sized and very brilliant blossoms. It is curious that in all these years of self-seeding in rich soil these dwarfed morning-glories haven't reverted to their norm."

"Perhaps," the girl answered, "it is because it is much easier for men and animals and plants to degenerate than to recover from degeneracy. I think it is."

"That is a fruitful thought," he answered, eagerly. Then with one of those sudden transitions which were common with this alert-minded young man, and which had become a matter of interested observation to the young woman, he turned again to the gardener and asked:

"Are you going to the circus this afternoon?"

"Yes, Mas' Warren, of course, I *couldn't* miss dat."

"Very well. It may interest you to know that if you leave the plantation for any such purpose without first asking and receiving Mrs. Rhett's permission to do so, you will not be permitted to come back."

"But, Mas' Warren —" began the man. Rhett interrupted:

"You heard what I said. I mean it. You have your warning. The others were not warned. I shall make their punishment lighter."

Then turning to Hazel, he said:

"Come, Miss Cameron, let's go to the stables and interview Dolly Varden. Would you like to have sketching materials with you, or shall this be only a visit of preliminary study?"

"You are very good," she answered, with a certain suggestion of emotional disturbance in her voice which Rhett did not understand. "I'll take a little sketch-book and some pencils with me. I might need them, you know."

But while Rhett did not understand the occa-

sion for the girl's emotion, he recognized it, and, being a gentleman, he sought to provide against her embarrassment.

"I wonder where Kate is?" he said. "She loves a good horse, too, and if she isn't too much absorbed in some problem of ruchings or feathers or furnishings of her dinner-table, she'll be glad to go with us. Let's find her."

The girl stopped in the middle of the walk, and, facing him almost angrily, asked:

"Why do you make fun of Kate? Don't you know she is one of the noblest, as well as one of the sweetest of women?"

Rhett confronted her with all that was possible of earnestness and sincerity in his eyes, and, after a moment, answered:

"I know all that, and Kate knows that I know it. She knows that the man who should seriously affront her would have to answer to me, with a rigid accounting. But it has been my habit to laugh at Kate and to hear her laugh back, ever since she and I were boy and girl together. And in view of some things that have happened, perhaps it is just as well that I am able to laugh at

Kate and Kate able to laugh back at me. Ask her, in some moment of confidence. If she doesn't want me to laugh at her, I'll never do it again."

The girl was silent for a time, and the two walked on to the house, where they were to look for Kate. As they mounted the steps of the back porch, Hazel said:

"I was impertinent, Mr. Rhett, and I'm sorry. I hope you will forgive me."

"You were not impertinent in the least. It is only that you misunderstood. Your jealousy of Kate's dignity altogether pleases me. You heard what I said to the gardener?"

"Yes. But do you mean to be so hard upon him as that?"

"Yes. I mean to be very hard. These negroes have been taught a false doctrine by their school-masters, and they must unlearn it all if they are to remain at Mannamac. They have been taught that their freedom carries with it a license to disregard all obligation — even the obligation of a contract. It will be for their own good if I teach them otherwise. At any rate, I will not have

them treat Kate — who feeds them and pays them — as if she were of no consequence, and had no authority. They must learn to respect her authority and her dignity, or they must get off the plantation, and that lesson is already called for recitation. Just before you and I went into the garden, I sent a messenger to the fields with an instruction to Isaac concerning the work I had ordered done to-day. I did not expect that the messenger would find Isaac or any of the hands at work, and he did not. They have all gone to see the circus parade, and not one of them has so much as asked leave. They all knew that leave would be theirs for the asking. But they are insolently determined not to ask leave. Very well, I will teach them a truer gospel of freedom, or I will drive every man jack of them off the plantation. They have misinterpreted their liberty in the same way with reference to their work. They expect Kate to feed them and pay them in strict accordance with their contracts, but on their part they feel free to violate the contracts at will, to neglect the work at their good pleasure. It is my function to awaken their

minds, as it were, to impress upon them a sense of the mutuality of contracts."

"What will you do?"

"Take possession of the smoke-house key. To-morrow is the day for the issue of three days' rations. I shall issue only two days' supplies to those who have quitted their work to-day without asking leave."

"But isn't that rather hard upon them?"

"I hope they will so regard it. Otherwise the discipline would be lost upon them. At any rate, it is not in the least unjust. They have contracted to do three hundred days' work for three hundred days' pay, and three hundred and sixty-five days' food supplies. They have not done their work at all faithfully, and as a consequence Kate's affairs are in a state of stress. I cannot deal with that now. But with to-day's malfeasance I can deal, and I will, in a way that ought to enlighten their minds. They have quitted pressingly needed work without even asking permission. They have abandoned for a day the duty for the doing of which Kate is expected to pay them a day's wages and give them a day's food. I shall accept their

terms. I shall dock every man of them the equivalent of a day's pay and cut off a day's rations. There isn't a labor union in all the land that would not approve that as just and right."

"But negroes are so different, you know. Of course they *can't* resist the temptation of a circus."

"True. But if they take their pleasure they must pay for it as all other people must do, or at the very least they must ask leave. They have no right to expect Kate to pay them for a day's work that they haven't done, unless they have her permission. The fundamental error of the negroes, Miss Cameron, is in supposing that they can enjoy the privileges of free men without paying the price that all other free men pay. They expect to be free and at the same time to be cared for as they were in slavery. They want all the persimmons and they don't want to wield the pole."

"But nobody else holds them to so rigid a rule. What if they refuse to submit to what you propose?"

"Then of course they must leave the plantation at once. So long as they remain upon it, they must

obey orders and fulfil the obligations of their contracts. Their case is not different from that of other men under contract to labor."

"But what about Kate? Suppose all her hands should leave in a body? Who would cultivate her fields?"

"A gang of Italians under a padrone. I would telegraph to my partners for them, and have them here within twenty-four hours. And each man of them would do more work in a day than any negro has ever done on this plantation in a week. Now let me make myself understood, Miss Cameron. I know you think me hard and cruel —"

"I do not think you cruel," she answered. "It is only that I don't understand."

"Very well, then. You shall understand."

At that moment Kate came out of the house, key basket in hand, and said:

"Oh, I'm so glad to find you, Warren! To save my life, I can't make out how much seven times one and three-quarters is — or are, — bother the grammar of it — the thing is serious. It pertains to rations."

"Turn it over to me, Kate," the young man

answered, "and let me have the smoke-house key. For a time, at least, I'll take all these problems off your hands and I know how to multiply one and three-quarters by seven."

"Oh, I'm so glad! You don't know how these things bother me. I don't think it was fair to invent fractions, anyhow. Why couldn't they have left arithmetic in whole numbers? It is so much easier. You see I can remember that six times eight is forty-two, but when it comes to fractions I'm all at sea."

"Six times eight are forty-eight, Kate," answered Rhett, "but that isn't a matter of any importance. The thing of real consequence is that you shall turn your smoke-house keys over to me for a time, and let me manage the distribution of rations. Come. Don't you want to go to the stables with Miss Cameron and me? She's going to make a picture of my new mare, Dolly Varden."

"Why, of course I'll go. You see Hazel is a genius and she'll idealize your mare—or ought I to say idolize? You see in girls' schools, they teach things so much more loosely than they do

in boys' schools. Now there was that mistake I made a few minutes ago, when I said that six times eight was forty-eight when really it is forty-two. You see no boy would be capable of a blunder like that. But it's time for snack, so we can't go to the stables yet. Oh, Warren, you don't know how good it is to have you here to look after things and especially to do the sums and slice the ham. You know I can't help cutting it thick, and of course that's a crime."

X

THE BIRTH OF ACQUAINTANCE

THE days went on agreeably at Mannamac. Charley Danforth — who had not visited the plantation for years before — came every day now. Usually he arrived in the dusk of the evening, though often he came in time for the four o'clock dinner. In either event he remained overnight, so that the evenings — moon or no moon — saw a pleasant company assembled in the porch if the weather permitted, in the great drawing-room if the weather happened to be unfavorable — as usually it did not. The weather of the Virginian midsummer rarely plays tricks upon those who are disposed to rejoice. On about three days out of five it furnishes what the Virginians call “a thunder-cloud,” during the afternoon. But the “thunder-cloud” only clears the air for an evening in the porch. If there ever was anywhere on earth a finer or more

enjoyable climate than that of Virginia in summer-time, it is that of summer-time in Virginia.

And nobody ever appreciated the conditions thus furnished by the climate more gratefully than did the two women and the two men who at this time constituted the company in the great, colonnaded porch at Mannamac.

Now and then a carriage full of callers would drive up, and these always received a sufficiently cordial welcome to satisfy their minds. But if they did not come, the four who constituted the resident company there in the porch made no complaint of the fortune that kept others away. After all, the callers were apt to be "new people" in Virginia, and — "Well, we can be happy without them," Kate was accustomed to say.

It had been so very long since Charley Danforth had been at Mannamac, that naturally he had a great deal to say to Kate, and she a great deal to communicate to him. This, of course, threw Warren Rhett and Hazel Cameron each upon the other as the only available conversational resource, and of necessity the personal acquaintance of the two rapidly ripened.

Warren had been attracted by the peculiar charm of Hazel's manner, as she had been fascinated with his personality and with his character as it little by little unfolded itself. She rarely spoke of herself or of her affairs — never, indeed, except in answer to direct questions — so that it was very slowly that Warren learned anything about her. He might have got the whole story from Kate, of course — if Kate could have kept her attention upon the telling of it long enough to enlighten him, without going off at a tangent of thought or memory. Indeed, Kate really wanted to tell him about Hazel, and to that end she one evening deliberately "changed partners," as it were, sending Danforth out into the shrubbery to talk with Hazel, while she herself retired with Rhett to the back porch with the avowed purpose of "telling him all about Hazel." But she made no very great success out of the effort, as a report of what happened upon that occasion will perhaps show.

"There," Kate said, as the two began to promenade the rear porch, "there! I've got those two off at last, and I am going to tell you

all about Hazel. You see, Warren, she's the very dearest, sweetest girl in the world — ”

“ Oh, that's like a deaf and dumb asylum,” he interrupted.

“ A deaf and dumb asylum? How on earth do you mean, Warren? ”

“ Why, simply that it ‘ goes without saying.’ ”

“ I don't understand you at all.”

“ Of course not. Don't try to. Just believe that I am — well, let us say, very greatly pleased with your friend, Miss Hazel Cameron, so greatly pleased as to need no praise of her at your hands. Then go on and tell me about her. Give her a local habitation and a name. Where did you find her? Who is she? Whence cometh she? Tell me about her.”

“ But I can't if you go on interrupting me in that way. You see I started to tell you how charming she is — ”

“ And I had discovered all that for myself — ”

“ There you go, interrupting me again! How can I tell you about her if you won't let me talk? You see, men can be interrupted and then come back to what they wanted to say and say it straight.

Women can't do that. Yes, Hazel can, and often she does. That's one of the things about her that fascinate me. Where was I? Oh, I know — but you interrupt so. I was going to say that I suppose the difference between women and men is due to the different ways they are taught at school. Still, there's Hazel, of course. She was in the same school with me, and yet she's different. Of course she was much younger than me — and I suppose that makes a difference. Or ought I to say she was younger than I? I never can remember which is right, and Hazel always knows. Isn't it queer? But as I was about to say, of course, under the circumstances you simply mustn't fall in love with Hazel, though if I were a man I'd do it anyhow, and' take the consequences."

Rhett was about to ask, "What circumstances do you refer to, Kate? You haven't mentioned any that seem to forbid me to fall in love with your friend, as I am strongly disposed to do," but he felt in his soul that the query would result in nothing. Furthermore, he vaguely realized that he had already done the thing that Kate's utterly unrevealed "circumstances" forbade him to do;

and still furthermore, at that moment Hazel and Danforth — having exhausted interest in each other's conversational resources perhaps — marched through the great passageway and confronted the other two with the announcement that the gibbous moon was just then beginning to climb the eastern sky, and that certain of its light and shadow effects, as revealed among the trees in front, were "really too fine to be missed."

Thus ended Kate's carefully arranged effort to tell Warren "all about Hazel." Kate was sure she had done so, and her soul was satisfied.

Warren was not seriously disappointed. He felt that he knew a good deal about Hazel already, and he had confidence in his ability to discover the rest, particularly as he and Hazel were now riding together every morning, while Danforth and Kate managed somehow to keep a hundred yards or so in the rear. Sometimes the hundred yards' interval stretched itself to half a mile or more.

As he and Hazel rode they talked, but that was by no means all of it. The two were comrades in other ways. They discussed books and art;

they exchanged views as to social relations, moralities, and the like, little by little coming to understand each other and more and more to appreciate each other.

There were certain characteristics of Warren Rhett that filled Hazel with amazement and admiration, though the individual manifestations of the qualities were in themselves trifling. She had already been much impressed by his peculiar gift of securing obedience even from the unwilling, and without any sort of bluster. She had spoken of this to Kate, and Kate had answered :

“ Oh, yes. He’s just like his father, only more so. Whatever he makes up his mind for you to do you’ve simply got to do, and that’s all there is about it. Sometimes you don’t want to, or you think you don’t want to, or at least you think that you think you don’t want to — I’ve got that mixed, but you know what I mean. It was always so, even when he and I were boy and girl together. That’s what made it so hard for me when his father decided to marry me, — so hard to tell him about it, you know, — but I must say he made it as easy as he could for me. Why, he didn’t

even laugh, Hazel! Don't you think that was very nice of him?"

"I think Mr. Rhett's conduct on that occasion was exemplary," the girl replied. "You've told me all about it before, you know?"

"Did I? I had forgotten. Well, then let's talk of something else. Do you know, I don't think green is becoming to me, do you?"

"Why not consult Mr. Rhett on that point? His taste seems to be excellent, so far as I can discover."

"Oh, I know what he would advise. He'd dress me in deep reds, if he had his way. He always did when — when I was a girl and he cared about it." There was just a touch of melancholy in her tone. "Once when I had only one red gown and it got a bit worn, he wouldn't let me wear anything else, till I simply *had* to send and get some others like it. That's what we were talking about, isn't it? — his way of making everybody do as he says?"

"Yes, that is what we were talking about," answered Hazel, abstractedly. Hazel understood Kate better than anybody else ever did. Perhaps

that is why the two were bound together in so perfect a friendship.

One morning, when the little cavalcade was setting out for a ride of a dozen miles before breakfast, Dolly Varden seemed a good deal more restless than usual. She wanted to do things — to run, to jump fences, to break her own or her rider's neck — to do anything that might break monotony — anything that might enable her to express herself and to work off some of the pent-up energy within her. She bit at the other horses. She kicked at them viciously. She struck out with a fore foot at the negro who was holding her head, so terrifying him that he abandoned his duty and fled.

Rhett soothed the excited creature with caresses of voice and hand. Then he mounted to the saddle and with one sharp command to her to "be still," reduced her to subjection. She continued, however, to tremble with suppressed excitement, and Rhett, taking pity upon her, turned to his companions and said:

"Excuse me for a brief while. The poor creature wants a little run, just to relieve her over-

wrought nerves. Ride out along the Pine Quarter road, and I'll join you after she has had her spin."

Then turning the mare in an opposite direction, he gave her her head, permitting her to choose her own pace. She chose full speed, and when, after half a mile of it, he turned her about, she voluntarily fell into a graceful gallop, which ended in a trot, as he caught up with the rest of the company on the Pine Quarter road. As he rode up by the side of Hazel, he called to his mare to "Walk!" and she instantly obeyed — having worked off the nervous excitement that had tormented her.

A few moments later the party met a negro boy mounted bareback on a mule — a boy whom Kate had sent with certain notes of hers to neighbors, summoning the elect among them to be her guests at dinner that day; for Kate was troubled that she had in no formal fashion marked Warren's return to the home of his fathers.

Warren stopped the boy with a question:

"Why didn't you curry and water that mule before you started?"

"Well sir, you see —"

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"Yes, I see. That's enough. The mule's coat is rough and dirty, and its hollow flanks show clearly that it is suffering for want of water. Go on home. Give the beast all the water it wants, and then curry it properly. I'll look at it when I get back. After you've done that — after it, remember — tell Everard I want him to build a fence enclosing the ground around this mare's stable — about an acre of it — for a paddock. Tell him there are a lot of rails in piles down in the dense woods by the second bridge over the creek, where the fence was removed a year or so ago. He can use them for the paddock."

Then turning to the girl by his side, he said:

"The mare needs a little more liberty, and a paddock will give it to her."

"I'm glad you look at liberty in that way," said Hazel.

"Precisely, how do you mean?" he asked, adding: "I'm interested."

"Why, that liberty is something to which every living creature is entitled, but that its enjoyment must be regulated, restricted, restrained."

He thought a moment, and then said:

"I wish you would enlarge upon your thought. There is back of it something that it might be intellectually profitable for me to hear."

"Well, it seems to me that restraint upon liberty is necessary to the highest enjoyment of liberty itself. You plan to give Dolly Varden a certain liberty, — liberty to walk or run about over an acre or so of ground, liberty to lie down and roll, when she pleases. But you are going to put a fence around her paddock. If you didn't she would wander away into the corn-fields or the wheat-fields, and to-morrow she would die of founder. Absolute liberty would be fatal to her."

"I see," he said, after a moment's pause. "But how about intelligent human beings? I have a theory that every human being born into this world has a right to do precisely as he pleases, so long as in doing as he pleases he does not, directly or indirectly, interfere with or abridge the equal right of any other human being to do as he pleases."

The two rode on for a space before the girl replied:

"Your doctrine is sound enough, I think, but in practical effect we are too apt to forget the 'so long as' — the qualification, the necessary limitation upon liberty."

"Would you mind illustrating?" he asked.

"Well, if you were minded to make all that is possible of discordant noise, and if you came out here into these woodlands that belong to you, and that are remote from the dwellings of your fellow men, you might whoop and halloo, and beat tom-toms to your heart's content, and you would be within your right. But if you invaded the residence streets of a city with such noises, thereby robbing other people of their right to peace, you would be justly arrested and punished. Most of the injustices that afflict us in life, it seems to me, are due solely to that kind of forgetfulness of the limitations of liberty."

The girl had never made so long a speech in her life, before, but under inspiration of this man's mind she had begun to think seriously, and her utterance was a first fruit of that serious thinking. She shrank a little from further expression, but there was one more thought in her mind that it

seemed necessary to utter, if only to complete what she had said.

“In brief,” she continued, “every obligation that we assume in life, and not only so, but every obligation that circumstances impose upon us, is a limitation upon liberty. The very existence of other people in the same world with us is a paddock fence around us, restraining us from straying into forbidden fields.”

As they talked, they came to a plantation gate across the public road. Rhett forced his mare unwillingly up to it and opened it, without interrupting the conversation. A little later they came upon that one of the negroes who posed as the carpenter and general master mechanic of the plantation, and Warren addressed him:

“Tom,” he said, “that gate across the road back there is in a bad way. The top hinge has three of its screw-holes rusted out, and it is cracked all the way across. The gate will be sagging presently and difficult to open or shut. I want you to fix it at once. If you’ll look in the passageway of the big corn-crib — about half-way back, on the third log from the top, — you’ll find a good

hinge that has never been used. Put it on the gate and don't use screws in doing so. Use wrought nails — the biggest you've got — and clinch them thoroughly."

The man answered sullenly:

"Yes, sir."

Thereupon Rhett called back to him:

"I'll inspect the work after it is done. See that it is well done."

A few minutes later the girl asked:

"Why did you do that?"

"Why did I do what?"

"Why did you call back at him in that way, saying you would inspect the work?"

"Oh, I see," he answered, with a little laugh.

"Well, Tom knows he ought to have discovered and remedied the condition of that gate long ago. He knows he is under my censure for not having done so, and he resents it. If I hadn't warned him that I would inspect his work he would have done it in a fashion to defeat my purpose. You see the negroes on this plantation are beginning to resent my coming. They have had a good, easy, indolent time of it, and my coming has made an

end of all that. I am insisting that they shall earn their wages, and that seems to them a cruel hardship. They resent it as an injustice, a wrong, an invasion of their rights, a trespass upon their liberty, or, as they call it, their freedom. They are planning resistance, and they don't know how to resist. Tom doesn't want to put that hinge on the gate, — not because of the little work involved, but because I have ordered it. If he dared, he would so put it on as to defeat my purpose. He would set it so that the gate would sag and be hard to open and shut — the very thing I wish to avoid. But now that I have warned him that I will inspect his work, he will not dare do that."

Hazel made no reply for a time. After awhile she said :

" It seems to me very wonderful."

" What does? "

" Why, the way in which you see things. When we met that chap on the mule, back there, your mind was certainly upon something else, but you instantly observed that the mule had not been curried and that its hollow flanks indicated a want of water."

"All that," he replied, "was obvious enough. I must have been blind not to see it at a glance."

"Perhaps so. But how on earth did you see the top hinge of that gate, and count the broken screw-holes, or whatever they were, while you were busily engaged forcing Dolly up to the latch and at the same time carrying on a conversation with me about a matter that required very careful thought? And again how came you to know precisely where those rails were, and precisely where that hinge was, and all the rest of it? It seems to me very wonderful."

"I think perhaps I understand that," he replied. "And yet it seems simple enough. In my profession everything depends upon the engineer's alert observation. A weak spot unobserved anywhere may cost scores or even hundreds of human lives. I remember once observing a very little sipe of water from above, when I was constructing a tunnel under a stream. I saw instantly that there was a dangerously weak point in construction, and tracing it to its source I saw that there was a pillar out of plumb because

of a defective foundation. An enormous weight — a weight that it would not be worth while to express to you in figures — rested upon that pillar, which was in danger of giving way at any moment. If it had given way, nearly a hundred men at work in that hole would have perished.”

“What did you do?” asked the girl, nearly choking with emotion.

“I ordered the men to run for their lives.”

“And you ran, too, of course?”

“No, of course not. It was my duty to stay there, to inspect, to devise a remedy. You see the threatened collapse, if it had occurred, would have cost my employers a million dollars or more.”

“Let’s gallop our horses!” said the girl excitedly, and the next half-mile was quickly covered. When the horses settled down to a dog-trot again, which presently lapsed into a walk, Hazel turned her face full upon her escort and said:

“Will it be an impertinence if I beg you to tell me the rest of that story?”

“Oh, there isn’t any story to tell. I only mentioned the incident to explain why a man of my

profession must cultivate habits of quick observation."

"Yes, I understand that. But what did you do? How long did you remain there? And what happened afterwards? I simply *must* know the sequel to the story."

Rhett smiled, but did not laugh. He understood and profoundly respected the girl's excited enthusiasm. In a placid voice, he answered:

"I suppose I stayed there for three or four hours. I didn't time it, but I remember the measurements I had to take and the calculations I had to make, and so I think it must have taken me three or four hours to plan the work of reconstruction."

"But what did you do then?" asked the girl in a tone so eager that it seemed almost angry.

"Why, I went out to the mouth of the bore, ordered the tools and materials needed, and called for volunteers to do the work of safeguarding. I could not order any man to put his life in such danger, of course."

"And did any of them volunteer?"

"Yes, every man of them. There wasn't a

coward among them. There rarely is a coward among the men who do the world's work in America."

"And so you took them all back?"

"No; only ten of them. It was not necessary to risk the lives of more."

"Let's gallop again!" she said, and at the end of the gallop she turned to him appealingly and pleaded:

"Let's go home now!"

When she and Kate went above stairs to change their gowns she turned to her friend with passion and said:

"Kate, there are heroes in this world who never heard a bullet whistle, or faced a cannon fire!"

"I suppose there are," said Kate, placidly. "Diana, won't you come here and unhook this thing? I've got it caught in something."

XI

MEN, WOMEN, AND GENIUS

AFTER a month or so, there came certain evenings when Charley Danforth's somewhat neglected professional engagements peremptorily forbade him to pass the time at Mannamac. He had clients to see at his office. He had consultations to attend in Richmond. He had papers of importance to draw. Whatever the reason, he reluctantly stayed away from Mannamac now and then, and the reluctance was very real.

On such evenings Kate was apt to have a headache, whether consequently or merely coincidently, both Rhett and Hazel were too polite even to conjecture. The not unpleasing result was that about twice a week there was a long *tête-à-tête* conversation between Rhett and the young woman.

On one of these occasions he said to her :

"You haven't yet painted Dolly Varden. Doesn't she please you?"

"Yes, she pleases me very much — so much that I'm going to ask you to let me try to ride her soon."

"You shall do that, if you think you can manage her, and I'll be there to help keep her in subjection. But why haven't you painted the picture? The sketch seemed to me excellent."

"I've given it up," she answered, "because I really have no capacity. You see, a picture of the mare without her rider would look just like Dolly or any other mare. The differences would all be in the pigments. She should be painted with you on her back, if painted at all. I realized that on that first morning, out there at the stable. Then I tried to paint the picture that way, and failed miserably, as I always do when I try to paint real pictures."

"But, — I don't understand."

"Why, you see, Mr. Rhett, I have no real ability. I have only a certain technical facility. When a proud horse-owner wants a portrait of his animal, I can produce it for him. I can draw

the form correctly, and reproduce every detail of color and of light or shade. But such things aren't pictures. The only horse pictures I ever painted — the only ones I mean that are anything more than mere portraits — are hanging in bar-rooms."

She said this with a disgust that had a trace of bitterness in it.

Very gently he asked:

"Would you mind telling me how that comes about? Don't say a word if the subject distresses you."

"I have wanted to tell you about this," she said. "You know Kate and her ways. She has several times told you that I'm a 'genius' and can do anything. I have tried to hush her, but she persists, and her persistence puts me in a false position. It makes me seem to pose as a gifted woman, when I am nothing of the sort, and I am glad of an opportunity to set myself right in your eyes. Of course there are no real geniuses among women — there never was one, there never will be one, and to say truth there never ought to be one."

"I am not so sure of that," he answered. "I have never thought the matter out. However, that will keep till another time. At present I want to hear about yourself — whatever you are disposed to tell me."

"The other subject is much the more interesting," she replied. "Or at any rate it ought to be, and would be, if it were not that personal gossip is, after all, the one thing of chief interest to human beings."

"Just how do you mean? I am interested in that suggestion."

"Why, you have been a guest at many dinner-parties, of course, and you have attended many receptions. You must have observed that nine-tenths of the conversation at such functions is personal — talk about other people — in short, gossip, whether of a pleasant sort or the reverse. Indeed, as you very well know, it is considered 'bad form' to indulge in any other sort of conversation on such occasions. I suppose that is because if you should happen to say anything intelligent, anything thoughtful, anything really worth saying, your interlocutor might not be able

to respond intelligently. That would expose his or her ignorance or lack of brains, uncomfortably. Anyhow, the talk upon such occasions is all chatter, chatter, chatter, and mostly it is personal. We discuss Miss X's peculiar lack of color sense, as illustrated by her gowns, or we talk of the lack of sympathy in Miss Y's voice when she sings with exquisite correctness, or we discuss Miss Z's irrepressible tendency to giggle on all occasions, and so on to the end of the chapter. It is all personal, and mainly it is all carpingly censorious."

"Yes. And that is why so many men of brains withdraw themselves from social functions and always have a headache or a severe cold or a 'previous engagement' when such functions are on. That is why we have no salons in which brilliant men and women meet to discuss and to influence literature, art, and public affairs. The majority of the company in every case is stupid and uninformed. Upon humane considerations society decrees that serious subjects shall not be mentioned upon social occasions lest the vacuous, the uninformed, the thoughtless, be put at a

disadvantage. But I want to hear about the horse pictures."

"Oh, it is a simple story. I have painted many stupid portraits of horses — just about as valuable or as valueless as so many colored photographs might be. They are cherished by the owners of the horses, just as family photographs are kept in an album or framed and hung upon the walls. Twice in my life I have made real pictures of horses — twice only — because only twice have I had the opportunity. One of those pictures is called 'The Finish.' It represents the head and fore-quarters only of a race-horse, coming directly toward you as he crosses the line a winner. The face of the horse and the face of his rider constitute the picture. You will believe that the painting of it interested me when I tell you that in order to make my studies of those intensely eager faces of winning horses and winning men, I fifteen times placed myself just in front of the finish wire and depended upon my agility and my good luck to save my life.

"The other picture is called 'Afterwards.' It is the picture of a noble trotter grazing

luxuriously in a blue grass pasture, after his owner has finally withdrawn him from the turf as a horse that has done his work well. I tried to put into it some suggestion of the fiery vigor still remaining in the horse's soul,—the grit, the spirit, the self-confidence, and the readiness to try conclusions upon fair terms,—together with some suggestion of the noble animal's enjoyment of his well-earned rest there in the blue grass pasture. I painted both pictures lovingly. I painted them both upon commission from a dealer in pictures, and he sold both to be hung in a sumptuous barroom where horsemen, book-makers, and 'sporting men' congregate. Of course I can never see either of them again."

"Of course not," he answered, "and it seems a pity. But I should like to see them myself. Would you mind telling me where to find them the next time I go to New York? I don't mind visiting barrooms."

She told him.

Early the next morning he sent a chap to the railroad station, to send off a telegram. Ten days

later the two pictures were hung upon the walls of the great hall at Mannamac.

That, however, occurred ten days later. Tonight the conversation went on with no suggestion in it of the purpose thus later fulfilled.

"I want to bring you back," he said presently, "to what you were saying about women — that there has never been a really great genius among women. Here comes Kate to help us discuss the subject."

"Oh, that's all nonsense," said Kate, cuddling herself into a corner. The spacious hall and porch chairs did not appeal to the little woman. She preferred a door-step, a nook, a corner, or, if none of these was available, she preferred to collect herself, as it were, Turkish fashion, upon the floor. "Why, Hazel, you're a great genius yourself. You paint lovely pictures, and you're pretty, and you talk charmingly. Besides that you can do exquisite wood-carving, you can sing, you can play the mandolin divinely, and I never in my life saw apple dumplings that equalled those you made for me a little while ago. By the way, you are to make some more to-morrow. And when are

mince pies in season, anyhow? I want you to try your hand at them. And you know you are the only woman I ever saw who knew how to carve thin slices from a ham. That reminds me, I must tell Henry to sharpen two or three of the case-knives that have been worn thin by scouring. Don't you agree with me, Warren, that Hazel is a genius and that there's nothing so good to slice a cold ham with as a case-knife that has been worn down by scouring till it's a mere film of steel?"

"My dear Kate, I make it a rigid rule of conduct to agree with you in all your opinions, whether they relate to genius or to ham, whether they concern themselves with creation or with cutlery."

"Now you are laughing at me. I know by your way of putting it. But I don't mind. You see, Hazel, I got used to Warren when he and I were boy and girl together. But go on and tell him what you were going to."

"Oh, it was nothing. I only said that there never had been a really great genius among women, and I think that is true."

"There was Sappho, you know," suggested Rhett.

"But was she a really great poet? If so, why is it that her work has not survived? Practically all that we know about it is from hearsay — upon the testimony of the critics of her time, and they were confessedly her personal admirers, her lovers, in fact. If her poetry was really great, why has none of it survived as the verses of Homer and Æschylus and the other Greek poets have done?"

"There was Elizabeth Barrett Browning," suggested Rhett.

"She was a woman of delightful personality," answered the girl; "she was the heroine of a tenderly interesting romance; she was the wife of a great poet; and she was undoubtedly a woman of rare gifts. But was she really a woman of genius? As a poet, would you think of classing her with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Keats, Byron, or Shelley? Is there a poem of hers — or a stanza or a line — that lingers in your memory so that you are irresistibly compelled to recall it when her name is mentioned? Is there anything

in her work that sticks to you in the same way that Bayard Taylor's 'Song of the Camp' does, or in the same way that Owen Meredith's 'Aux Italiens' does? I should not class either Owen Meredith or Bayard Taylor with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Scott, and Coleridge, but at any rate each of them has written something that so strongly appeals to the mind as to become an integral, structural part of one's thinking. I cannot recall that Mrs. Browning ever did that. That she was a poet, I admit, but that she was a great poet, no. So far as I can discover no woman has won that place — none has ever risen to the highest levels of achievement, though many have attained a creditably high level."

"I believe you are right," said Rhett, meditatively, "and it seems very strange."

"Why so strange?"

"Why, because poetry is the one art in which we should naturally expect women to excel. With their exalted sensitiveness, and with their extreme inclination to sentiment, it would seem that they ought to excel men in poetry and romance and painting."

"It is your gallantry, Mr. Rhett, that suggests that," said Hazel.

"I do not think so. But it may perhaps be my gallantry — supplementing whatever logical faculty I have — which suggests an explanation."

"Good! good!" exclaimed Kate. "What is the explanation?"

"Why, that women are themselves poems — in their personality and in their lives. They stand always too close to poetic things to see them in perspective as men may do. Now that I think of it most of the men who have written great poetry led lives so far removed from the finer things as to give them a very full perspective view indeed. Scott was a publisher, Milton a secretary, Byron a drunkard, Shelley a libertine, and Shakespeare and Marlowe and Ben Jonson, so far as we know anything about them, were habitués of tavern tap-rooms, and perhaps brawlers there — Marlowe died in a tavern brawl, you know. All of them stood far enough away from the finer sentiments to admire them unstintedly — far enough away to reflect them in full perspective in the mirrors of their minds."

Kate clapped her little hands, with a joyous laugh, and said :

“Now I’m satisfied, Warren. I’ve been thinking that work and the world had changed you, but they haven’t. You’re the same dear, romantic, chivalric boy you were when you used to take me fishing down at the creek. Hazel, he was fond of fishing and not at all fond of me, I think. Yet if I wanted to go with him he always let me, and he spoiled his own fishing for my sake. He baited my hook and took the fish off, whenever I caught one, to the neglect of his own line. I remember once he was playing a splendidly big and gamey trout when I lifted a little gudgeon out of the water. He instantly threw his rod down, abandoning his fish, and came to my assistance. After all, I suppose that is a part of the explanation about men and women doing things. Men like to do things for women and women like to let them.”

Hazel rose from her seat and moved toward the stairs, saying :

“I should have expected precisely that from Mr. Rhett, Kate, but why did you permit it?

Why didn't you let the gudgeon get away and leave him to play his trout?"

"I suppose it's because I am a woman," answered Kate, as the two said good night to Rhett and started up the stairs.

XII

A REVELATION FROM KATE

WARREN RHETT continued to press his experiment with negro labor. Its success was not entirely satisfactory.

He had two classes of farm hands to deal with — those who rented little patches, under contract to give up a prescribed portion of their crops in payment of rent, and those who were hired by the year to till the rest of the plantation. With the first class he found that he could do nothing whatever. Their standard of living was exceedingly low. All that they wanted was enough to fill their stomachs with, and they found it easy to get that in great part by irregular means, not nominated in the bond. It was not the custom for the landowner to take any part of anything except the “selling crops,” wheat, corn, and tobacco. They grew little gardens in which he

had no interest. Even in their turnip fields, their sweet potato beds, their watermelon patches, and the like, the owner was supposed to have no share, and they grew little else than these. For the rest there was game in the woods, and it was always easy to supplement that source of meat supply by the surreptitious killing of a pig or a sheep now and then — a pig or a sheep that belonged to some one else — or by a raid upon the poultry yards.

The net result was that the rented lands brought almost no return to their owner, and they were in no way improved by a culture that took no account of the future. The negroes renting them not only planted no orchards, no grape-vines, no currant or gooseberry bushes that might yield fruit for ten or twenty years to come; they neglected even to put in asparagus and horseradish beds and the like, because they were not sure they should retain their tenure of the land long enough to reap a benefit from such labor — and additionally because providence of the future was not a part of their nature. They might get a chance to go to some town and live off the work of their

womenkind, and by the doing of odd jobs of their own. Every one of them held that hope as a cherished ambition — a dream of luxurious existence that might some day be fulfilled. Why then should they make asparagus beds, or plant horseradish or gooseberry or currant bushes, or do any other thing which required a year or two of preliminary growth before yielding a return of any kind? Why should they spread upon the land that they might or might not want to cultivate next year, the scrapings of their mule stables, which they could sell to the Yankee or the foreign truck farmers round about for precious dollars? Why should they pay out good money for hens, turkeys, and other fowls, and breed poultry for themselves, when there were the easily accessible poultry yards of the plantation owners always “on tap” as it were? Why should they trouble themselves to feed hogs when the plantation owner’s hogs were running wild in woods so dense that it really required no great ingenuity to secure a shoat whenever one was wanted? In brief, why should they weary themselves with work when they could satisfy all their wants without work?

With the other class — the hired hands who were expected to cultivate the greater part of the plantation — Warren Rhett found it somewhat easier to deal, but the results were not much more satisfactory. These hired negroes had put in less than half a crop and they had grievously neglected even that. By dint of personal supervision and ceaseless inspection, he was able to make them amend these conditions somewhat. Late as it was in the summer, there were crops that might still be planted with a reasonable prospect that in that favorable climate they could be brought to maturity. There were excellent facilities at hand for marketing such crops in the Northern cities, and Rhett insisted that every acre available for their cultivation should be deeply ploughed and promptly seeded.

It wasn't easy to get this done in face of the obstinate determination of the negroes to do as little work as possible, and more especially to resent and resist any and every assertion of authority over them, as a trespass upon their liberty, — the nature of which they utterly failed to understand.

But by diligent insistence, and still more by reason of his gift of commanding men and compelling their obedience, Warren Rhett got it done — in some degree at least.

Meanwhile he was learning a good deal with regard to the problem he was working over, and what he learned came out in conversation one evening, when the guests at Mannamac included a number of strangers — newcomers, unfamiliar with the customs of the old régime in the Old Dominion, but in their own various ways acquainted with existing conditions.

All of these had been invited — after the old Virginian custom — to “dine and spend the evening.” To some of the persons whose names were on the invitation list that Warren submitted to Kate, Kate had objected. They were not “recognized people,” she urged.

“But my dear Kate,” Warren answered, “they will be ‘recognized persons’ after they have once dined at Mannamac upon your invitation. By the way, you ought to pay some heed to the distinction between the words ‘persons’ and ‘people.’”

"Oh, whatever you want you can have, at Mannamac, you know. If you want these — persons — is that right? — they shall be invited most cordially. And I dare say they're not so terrible, after all. You think, don't you, Warren, that most of them eat with their forks and know what a napkin is for?"

"My dear Kate, you ought to know me well enough to know that I would never ask you to invite anybody to your dinner-table who was not really a gentleman or a gentlewoman. I have invited a very distinguished negro educator of negroes to join us —"

"Not at dinner!" she exclaimed in genuine alarm.

"No, not at dinner and not at supper. I do not recognize the social equality of the negro, any more than you do. But this man has some information that I want to get at, and he is altogether a gentleman in his way — so much a gentleman that he wouldn't think of expecting or accepting an invitation to dine or sup at your house. I have asked him to join us after supper, in order that he may tell me some of his experi-

ences and give me some of his opinions. I have been perfectly frank with him and he has frankly accepted the situation. He will be here to speak for his race, when I ask him to do so, and to give us the results of his efforts to educate his fellow negroes. He'll come to us, in the porch of course. He is an old friend of mine. He and I were boys together, his 'mammy' having been the cook at Mannamac. And years ago, when I found that he had so much more common and uncommon sense than any of his fellows had, I myself sent him north to be educated. Dollars were difficult things for me to get in those days, and so I'm afraid he had to put up with some privations, but at any rate he got his education and he is to-day doing a notably good work among the negroes."

"Who is he?"

"Bob," answered the man; "better known now as the Rev. Robert Ryman D.D., but you remember him as Bob, who used to play marbles with me when we were boys together and who used to bring you buttermilk when you were thirsty."

"Oh, if it's only Bob, of course it's all right. I didn't understand you."

"Yes, it's only Bob," he answered, "but you must bear in mind that Bob is a graduate of Harvard College and on his own account the master of a school for negroes that is doing a really great work."

"Why, I thought you didn't believe in the education of negroes?"

"I do not believe in their miseducation, Kate — but in their education, yes, most heartily. And he is of one mind with me about that. You shall see when we come to discuss the matter."

"Then you plan to —"

"I'm planning nothing, Kate, except to have a lot of pleasant people to dinner. If after dinner we get to discussing the question of the future of the negroes, it will be no more than what we generally do after dinner in Virginia."

"That is all right," said Kate, "and I hope Hazel will wear the new gown I've been making for her out of two old ones. It is just lovely, and you know how charmingly she sings, if they'll only be polite enough to give her a chance. I think you are the one to see to that, Warren, and really you do look so handsome in white ducks!

Ought I to serve ice-cream with supper or afterwards in the porch if it doesn't rain? And if it does it won't make any difference except — except — what was I going to say, Warren? I declare I've forgotten."

"So have I, Kate. Don't let's bother to remember. You must 'get busy' with the notes of invitation. Hazel will help you, I've no doubt."

"So it has reached that stage, has it?" broke in Kate. "You're thinking of her by her first name? I was afraid of that. But I gave you fair warning at the outset that you mustn't do that."

"Mustn't do what, Kate?"

"Mustn't fall in love with Hazel, of course."

"But why not? Surely she is a very charming young woman and a very lovable one."

"Yes, I know." Kate said this slowly, meditatively, as if weighing the words and carefully considering those she should utter next. After a little she added:

"She's married already. Her marriage doesn't amount to anything, but all the same you mustn't fall in love with her, or at least you mustn'ted, as I told you, and you've gone and done it in spite of

my solemn warning. I don't blame you a bit. If I were a man I should fall in love with Hazel even if she were not only married but dead and buried. She's the very noblest, sweetest, and beautifullest woman in the world. Go on and win her, Warren. She's worth it, and you can do it if you are half the man I think you are. Don't ask me to explain. I have promised not to do so, and I always keep my promises except when I forget. Ask Hazel."

At that moment Hazel herself entered the dining-room, where the two had held their conference, and Kate greeted her coming with gladness.

"Come, Hazel," she exclaimed; "Warren wants me to invite a lot of people to a dining-day, and of course I've got to do it. He has promised that you'll help me with the invitations, and of course you've got to do it."

Warren Rhett went away sorrowing, bewildered and half-stunned by the words that Kate had so carelessly spoken.

XIII

WARREN RHETT STEADIES HIS MIND

WARREN RHETT was a man not easily daunted or dismayed. He had faced difficulties and dangers of many kinds and always he had borne himself bravely in confronting them. But now he was both daunted and dismayed. The situation revealed by Kate's words seemed to be one with which neither courage nor resolution, neither determination nor desperation, might deal with any hope of a satisfactory outcome. If Hazel Cameron was already a married woman there was nothing that even the most desperate daring or the most persuasive persistence could do. And yet Kate — a typical representative of social propriety — had urged him to go on and win the woman, assuring him that he could do so. He simply could not understand.

Two thoughts arose in his mind. One was that he must fathom the mystery of all this; the other was that he must arrange at once for his own retreat from a position that was utterly untenable, or might become so.

Leaving the two women in consultation over the invitations, he went to the stables, mounted his mare, bade a negro follow him on a mule, and rode to the Court-House village, which was also the railroad station.

After sending off half a dozen telegrams, the transmission of which very nearly wrecked the nervous system of the old station-master, who was also the "plug operator" on the telegraph line, he wrote a note and sent it to Kate by the negro boy who was to lead his mare back to Mannamac. In it he wrote :

"I'll be back in time for the dinner-party next Thursday. Meantime I must go to New York to arrange a business matter of importance. Till I see you again I shall be, of course,

" Sincerely yours,

" WARREN RHETT.

“ P. S. Please make my apologies to Miss Cameron, and bid her ride Dolly Varden as often and as long as she likes. W. R.”

Then he took a train for New York. He had not so much as a hand-satchel by way of baggage, but he knew from frequent experience how to get on without the conveniences of life. He could buy shirts, collars, cuffs, underwear, combs, brushes, and the like in New York. His wardrobe was at Mannamac, but he didn't want his wardrobe. He did not intend to visit anybody or to accept invitations of any kind. He was to be in New York for purposes of business, and he addressed himself to those purposes.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when he let himself into his office with his latch-key — the office boy not having arrived as yet. By half-past seven, when the office boy came, he had written a dozen telegrams and had them ready for transmission.

When the office boy at last appeared Rhett turned to him and asked :

“ Will you kindly tell me what time it is — *by*

your watch, I mean — I know what time it is by the clock on the wall."

"It's twenty-eight minutes of eight," answered the boy.

"Are you sure your watch is right?"

"Yes, sir. I set it every morning by the electric observatory clock."

"Then my watch has lost two minutes," said Rhett, "and you have lost half a dollar. I shall dock you that for being late. Your hour is seven o'clock, you know."

"But Mr. Rhett," pleaded the boy, "you see the other gentlemen don't get here as you do, at seven o'clock. They're never here till eight, and I didn't know you were in town."

"Well now, fix it firmly in your thinking apparatus that I am always in town, or likely to be here, and don't be late again. I'll forgive you this time and remit the fine. Take these telegrams over to the Western Union office, and these to the Postal, and send them off at once. Have them charged to our office account as usual."

As the boy went out a clerk entered. Rhett

gave him a cordial but hasty greeting, and then said :

“ Will you please bring me the specifications as to the African trestles and the Zambesi bridge? ”

“ I’m not sure that I can put my hands on them, sir. You see the firm decided not to bid for that contract.”

“ Yes, I know. But the firm sometimes changes its mind, and you remember my orders, that every paper relating to business that comes into this office or that is written in this office shall be filed and indexed and preserved.”

“ Here they are, sir,” answered the clerk who had been anxiously searching. “ But we’ve marked that thing off our list of possible undertakings.”

“ Go at once and put it on again.”

“ But that’s in another department, and — ”

“ Go and record it as a thing to be considered. And notify the clerk who should be here to make the entry, that he must hereafter present himself at the hour appointed, or hunt another job. I do not trust men to do their work accurately who

cannot keep their watches so regulated as to appear at the office promptly at the prescribed hour. Impress that upon the mind of the young man in question, will you? ”

“ I will, of course, but — ” The man hesitated.

“ But what? ”

“ Well, you see, Mr. Rhett, Denning’s situation is different from the rest of us’s; he’s got a poor old mother and three little nieces to take care of — they’re tiny things and their mother’s dead, and Denning’s mother has had a stroke lately, so he’s got to get breakfast and dress the children, and make the old woman comfortable before he comes down and — ”

“ That will do. Do you write shorthand? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then please take down this memorandum : ‘ Mr. Denning’s salary is to be increased by twenty per cent., the increase to be charged to my personal account. Mr. Denning’s hour of attendance at the office is extended to nine o’clock, and if at any time he finds it necessary to be late in coming, he is excused in advance.’ Communicate that to the cashier and the managing clerk, as a

message from me. Now will you let me have Mr. Denning's address, please? "

He made a memorandum of the address, and then, with that extraordinary readiness of transition which made him seem a marvel to the men in his employ, he set to work to study the specifications for the Zambesi bridge and trestle.

After awhile his two partners — juniors in every sense — came in. A little later there began to come responses to his telegrams. Some of these had been addressed to European houses and some to firms, in different parts of this country, that manufactured steel and other materials needed for this Zambesi bridge and its approaches. The latter despatches had asked two questions, — "At what price can you furnish the materials wanted, and how soon? "

When the replies were all in and Warren Rhett had carefully studied them, he said to his partners :

"We can take that contract and make a very satisfactory profit on it. The thing those people are most concerned about is time. My cablegrams from English steel men show that the best they

can do is to furnish the materials for the structure within six months. We can do the whole job in six weeks. We'll put in a bid on a basis of eight weeks, so as to give ourselves a margin of time. We'll make our bid about twice what theirs is likely to be in price — or a little less for security's sake — and it will be accepted because of our superior time offer. Mr. McCarthy," addressing the head clerk, "make up a bid for this work. We offer to do all of it — concrete, steel, earth approaches, trestles, cross-ties — everything — for the sum named upon that slip, and to finish the work within eight weeks after the contract is signed. Walter," addressing one of his partners, "make out a check for the deposit sum they require, and have it certified, so that McCarthy can enclose it with the bid. The award will be made in London, of course. It will take from three weeks to a month to send over the bid and get back the acceptance. That means that we have eleven or twelve weeks in which to get ready. Call a stenographer, please. I'll order the structural steel and the other things by telegraph at once."

"But Mr. Rhett," interposed one of the partners, — a man to whom Rhett had given an interest in the firm's business in return for his services and without exacting any tribute on his part to the capital stock, — "what if we shouldn't get the contract? We'd be left with a lot of useless material on our hands."

"Not at all. Structural steel is always usable somewhere, and besides, we shall get the contract."

"Why are you so sure of that?"

"Because I have cabled to every foreign firm that will bid, under a pretence of asking for sub-contracts, and the answers unmistakably indicate that the very shortest time that any one of them will name is six months. In a hurry as these people are, our offer of eight weeks will take the contract, although our price is much higher than theirs. Now I want you fellows to hold yourselves in readiness to go to Africa, either of you, at a moment's notice, to superintend the work there. It is altogether likely that I shall go myself, but in case I decide not to go, I want you to be ready. Johnny, get me my hat and coat, please."

He left the office as abruptly as he had entered

it. He went at once to the home of the clerk Denning, where he made a minute inquiry into the condition of things. Satisfied that nothing more than he had done could be done, he took the next train for Richmond, and returned to Mannamag.

It had been his purpose, in making this trip to New York, to steady his own mind, and he had steadied it. He had discovered a queer contradiction in Kate's words — a contradiction that needed clearing up. Kate had told him that Hazel was already a married woman. If the matter had rested there his own course of action would have been obvious. He would not have returned to Virginia at all, but would have devoted himself to the management of his various undertakings. But Kate had added something to her statement — something that he could not understand or in any wise explain even conjecturally. And Kate had spoken the words earnestly. It was always easy to know whether Kate was in earnest or not. That gentlewoman was as transparent as polished plate glass, especially to Warren Rhett, who had been her companion in childhood and youth. But to feel

sure that Kate had spoken the words earnestly was one thing, and to extract an explanation of them from Kate was quite another. That little lady was not good at explaining, for one thing, and for another she was scrupulously, almost morbidly, averse to the revelation, by any words of hers, of other people's affairs. Warren Rhett had thought this matter out. He had definitely decided that it would be futile to ask Kate to explain. So he had also definitely decided to confront Hazel herself with the problem and ask her to solve it.

But his train was delayed, and when he arrived at Mannamac, the guests were already assembling for the dinner-party he had planned. He had the briefest possible opportunity of speech with Hazel. In that brief moment he said to her:

"Kate tells me you are married. Why didn't you tell me? I shall ask you to explain at the first opportunity."

"And I will explain," she said. The next moment brought others into the conversation.

XIV

THE TEST OF A WOMAN'S BEHAVIOR

THE company assembled included a considerable variety of persons. There were two who represented the old life — a planter and his wife. The planter was a Colonel Forrest. He had fought through the Civil War and, as he put it, he had “faced a somewhat ameliorated form of starvation ever since.” He had managed to retain possession of his plantation in spite of the incumbrances upon it. He had somehow managed to make the land yield him a living under inefficient negro culture, and, being something of an optimist, he hoped that “the thing may last out my time and my wife’s.”

There was a visiting planter from Mississippi and his wife and daughter.

There was a newcomer, a Mr. Bandon, who had bought a part of a neighboring plantation — two or three hundred acres, including the “great

house." He and his wife and his daughter, who accompanied him, had been the entertainers of Kate and Hazel on the day of Warren Rhett's first arrival at Mannamac. They were altogether "nice" people — refined, educated, and accustomed to the most gracious social intercourse, but the daughter impressed Rhett as rather too intellectual. There were some other newcomers — obviously gentlefolk, but less well known to the company at Mannamac. There was Charley Danforth of course, and equally of course his sister, Miss Sallie. There were three or four others who need not be catalogued here.

Warren Rhett's purpose in giving the dinner-party, or "dining-day," as a function of that sort was called in Virginia, was primarily to make acquaintance with his new neighbors and to reëstablish relations with those who had been his neighbors during his father's life. But he had in mind also the fact that some discussion of the negro question as it presented itself under the new conditions in Virginia was sure to arise, and he very greatly wanted to learn the views of the varied company on that subject.

The dinner-party, by his direction, was conducted upon the old plan, prevalent in Virginia before the Civil War. The various dishes were placed upon the table, each in front of one who was expected to serve it. Before each gentlewoman there was a vegetable to which she was expected to help; before each gentleman there was a joint or a fowl which he was expected to carve. No wine accompanied the dinner. That — under Virginian traditions — would have been a barbarism, as much so as the service of dessert in advance of the soup. There was toddy, with toast in it, served to those of the gentlemen who wanted it, before dinner. But not until the dinner and dessert were done — not until the cloth was finally removed from the mahogany that for two hundred years had been polished every morning with beeswax and cork — was the wine brought on. When it came, it was an old sherry, brought from the cellar in dusty and thickly cobwebbed bottles, and decanted in the presence of the company. When it came the host filled his own glass first — in memory of those charming old savage days when the practice of poisoning one's guests

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was sufficiently prevalent to render some reassurance necessary — and then pushed the decanter, in its velvet-shod silver stand, to the guest on his right. It was the custom, when all the glasses were filled, for the host to rise and propose “The ladies, God bless them.” It was the custom for the gentlemen to rise and drink the toast heartily, the gentlewomen taking a single sip in response. It was the custom for the ladies then to rise and file out of the room, the gentlemen meanwhile standing and the host gallantly holding open the door.

On this occasion Warren Rhett set aside some of these customs in behalf of a more genial and congenial civilization.

“We will pledge the ladies,” he said, “but we’ll ask them not to leave us. In a more barbaric time their departure from the dinner-table when the wine came on was necessary in order that the savages then known as gentlemen might be free to get drunk if they pleased. The custom of dismissing the womankind survived in Virginia long after the gentlemen ceased to get drunk after dinner. I ask that it be abolished for to-day

—I beg the gentlewomen of the company to remain with us.”

“But, Warren,” Kate said, “you gentlemen mustn’t miss your smoke, and if we stay you won’t smoke till we all go out into the porch together. Of course every man is as disagreeable as he knows how to be after dinner, until he has had his pipe or cigar.”

“But why shouldn’t the gentlemen smoke while we are here?” asked Hazel. “They do it at dinner-parties in New York, where the dining-rooms are not half so well ventilated as this one is. And, after all, women do not really object to smoking. They pretend to, but it is chiefly an affectation.”

“Oh, Hazel!” interrupted Kate, “you mustn’t give away our sex’s secrets in that way. But of course there’s not the slightest reason why the gentlemen shouldn’t smoke here, with seven windows wide open. We’ll stay. Bring on the pipes and cigars, Henry.”

“I wonder,” said Miss Bandon, “whether the professed objection of women to smoking may not be attributable, in part at least, to jealousy.”

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"Would you mind explaining?" asked Danforth, who had taken her in to dinner. All the company had heard her question and they awaited the explanation in silence.

"I'm not quite sure I know what I mean," the girl answered. "Yes, I guess I do." She was not a Virginian and therefore she said "guess" and not "reckon." "I mean that many women smoke in secret, and when a banquet is on — you know a banquet is likely to grow tedious in its length, especially after the speaking and the story-telling begin — they grow impatient for the little quiet smoke they are accustomed to take after a dinner. If they cannot or will not have it, it seems to me quite natural that they should object to all smoking, as they cannot share in it. I've known them to take short cuts."

"Tell us about that please," said Warren Rhett, with a twinkle of recognition in his eyes.

"Oh, you remember it, Mr. Rhett," said the girl, "though when you met me this afternoon you did not know we had seen each other before."

"Frankly, I didn't," he answered, "but you really must excuse —"

“ Oh, there is no apology necessary. There is not the slightest reason why you should remember so casual a meeting with an insignificant person — especially in such a crush — and I doubt if I should remember it myself, but for — but for — never mind that. Let me tell the story to the company.”

She gave a little, playful wave of her hand to Rhett, which had the effect of checking his further interposition. Then she went on with what she had to say.

“ It was at a great literary function. We were celebrating the seventieth birthday of a great author. We were gathered at Delmonico’s — two or three hundred of us. I was there because I had written a few stories that had been published in a magazine. Mr. Rhett was there — as he wouldn’t himself tell you — because he was the author of two novels and a volume of verse published by the firm that gave the dinner. Now to get down to my story. We were seated at round tables — eight at a table. The feeding was over and the speaking had just begun. But there was no smoking because there were

'ladies present,' and the men were very melancholy. You see there was a prospect of three hours or more of this repletion without replevin as it were, and so they mourned. At the psychological moment a certain woman — the daintiest of our magazine poets and story writers, — really and truly the daintiest and most reserved and most refined — leaned back in her chair at the next table to ours and, catching Mr. Rhett's ear, said :

“ ‘Have you such a thing as a cigarette upon your person? I am dying.’

“He answered ‘No, but I have the price. What brand do you prefer?’

“She named her choice and within a few minutes he brought her a box of twenty-five, and she proceeded to fumigate. Her example was instantly and wildly contagious. Practically every man in the room lighted a cigar or a cigarette, and the melancholy proceedings became joyous again. Discourses that had been funereal in tone took upon themselves the optimistic character of college commencement addresses; lips that had been drawn down in grief and melancholy were relaxed into such smiles as theoretically ought

to accompany the reading of the comic newspapers, but in fact do not. From that moment onward every jest hit its mark, every pleasantry accomplished its purpose, and every speaker felt that he had succeeded in carrying off the honors of the evening. But I could not avoid overhearing a good many critical comments upon the young woman's behavior in starting the fumigation in that way. I refrain from quoting those comments — as I refrain from giving the young gentlewoman's name — because, personally, I do not approve of women's smoking, and I detest cigarettes. Still I think that young woman saved the situation as no man could have done."

Rhett was quick to see that the girl would be promptly beset with questions, some of which it might embarrass her to answer. So he gallantly came to her relief.

"I think I had the pleasure of being presented to you on that occasion, Miss Bandon," he said.

"Why, of course," she answered, and then, with purely mischievous intent, she added: "You took me in to dinner — our host having personally introduced us. For three or four hours we were

good comrades, and then of course you forgot all about me, after the manner of men."

"Believe me, Miss Bandon —"

"Believe me, Mr. Rhett," she interrupted, "that no apology is needed. New York is a great wilderness of all sorts and conditions of men — and of women also. And a vast, mixed company like that in which you and I met is not the place for the making of acquaintance. But tell me your opinion of women smoking. I've already told you mine, so you are at advantage with me."

"It all depends," he answered thoughtfully.

"That's a most conveniently cowardly phrase," answered the girl. "It doesn't mean anything, but it saves the situation."

"Let me make it less evasive and less cowardly," said Rhett, a trifle nettled. "I mean that it all depends upon the country I am in. You see I have lived in many remote parts of the earth. Customs differ. In Mexico everybody smokes — men, women, and little children; and everybody smokes everywhere — in street-cars, steam-cars, parlors, dining-rooms, churches — everywhere. The best-dressed and most distinguished dames

of a Mexican city smoke openly as they take the air in their carriages of an afternoon. Even their little girls, not yet in long skirts, think nothing of following their mothers' example. The sight of women smoking in Mexico and other Latin-American countries neither shocks nor distresses me, but I frankly confess that I was both shocked and distressed when that young woman of whom you have told us lighted a cigarette and kept the thing going as a continuous performance until the box of twenty-five was exhausted. So much for prejudice, I suppose."

"I cannot agree with you in that," said Hazel, gently but with manifest earnestness.

"What is your thought?"

"Why, that prejudice has nothing to do with the matter. Your prejudices — whatever their nature may be — do not change or cease to be when you cross a geographical line."

"What is it then that makes the difference?" asked Isabel Bandon with a note of challenge in her tone.

"Why, simply this, that undue boldness in women — in whatever way it is manifested — is

always and everywhere unlovely — detestable, abominable. In a country in which it is the universal custom for women to smoke, a woman's smoking in no way implies or suggests undue boldness, and therefore it does not shock or distress the onlooker. But in our country, where smoking is not common among women, — where in truth it is so very unusual that public indulgence in it is forbidden in all well-regulated restaurants, — the woman who openly smokes does something else that is far more objectionable, more unlovely, and more unwomanly than the mere smoking can be."

"And what is that?" asked the other, with the note of challenge and even of defiance in her voice.

"She lays aside her self-respect, she quits her womanhood, she forgets that modesty of demeanor which is an essential of good behavior in a woman."

Hazel spoke with vehemence — almost with anger, as if in recognition of the challenge of the other. That other made no open reply, but to her nearest neighbor, Danforth, she said:

"I wonder if it is any worse than for a woman to visit racing stables and paint portraits of horses for jockeys to rejoice in."

Kate overheard the remark, though she did not hear Danforth's placative reply. She instantly said to the company:

"Our gentlemen are very temperate. They are drinking no wine. Why then should we not adjourn to the porch without further ado?"

On their way out Kate, whose feminine perceptions were exceedingly quick, and whose loyalty was undying, seized Rhett's elbow and whispered into his ear:

"That woman's a cat. She's in love with you and she's jealous of Hazel. Look out for her."

He had no opportunity to say even a word in answer. Perhaps it wasn't necessary. Kate had an abiding faith in Warren Rhett's readiness of perception and in his ability to take care of himself.

She presently reinforced that ability. When the great oaken chairs were distributed in the porch and Warren took one of them, Isabel

Bandon, by accident of course, sat down in the one next to him. He said something pleasant to her, and then suddenly found that his long-stemmed Powhatan pipe would not draw. He rose and walked out into the grounds to clear it with the broom straw which he had requested Henry to bring. When it was cleared he did not return to the chair he had before occupied, for the reason that Kate had seated herself in it and was engaged in earnest converse with Isabel Bandon.

Kate had tact as well as temperament. She perfectly knew how to baffle a young woman's purposes while winning the young woman's favor and esteem. So Warren Rhett seated himself on the steps of the porch, and leaning against one of the pillars seemed entirely satisfied with the situation. Kate's tactics amused him.

There was no early moon that evening, but as the darkness fell, Kate directed Henry to light three hanging lamps — Venetian iron-work as to their frames, and encased in softly colored glass. Hazel had manufactured the things for porch purposes. They shed a softly subdued light

throughout the porch, without offending even the most sensitive eyes with glare.

The conditions and the company seemed so well reconciled to each other that when the time for supper came Kate ordered that rather imaginary than real repast served "lap fashion," as she said, in the porch.

Then it was that something happened to turn the conversation into the channel that Warren Rhett desired and had predetermined for it. But the thing came about in a way of which he had not dreamed.

Hazel was singing by request, Kate accompanying her upon the guitar, and all the company listening with delight when Isaac — the negro head man — came shambling up to the porch, with evident desire to say something.

XV

IN THE PORCH

ISAAC had some difficulty in presenting his thought. He managed at last, however, to say:

"The folks don't like the way you is a workin' 'em, an' they's a thinkin' o' quittin', leastways for a few days."

Isaac had hoped that this note of warning might impress and depress Rhett. It seemed to have no such effect. Rhett said, somewhat languidly:

"I'm very glad to hear that, Isaac," and he left it to Isaac to make the next remark. Isaac did not find it easy to do so, but after awhile he said:

"Yes, sir, they don't like the way they's a bein' worked, an' in partic'lar they don't like the way their liberty is bein' took away from them."

"Might I inquire — it is a matter of psycholog-

ical interest to me, Isaac — might I venture to inquire in what respects the liberty of the farmhands upon this plantation has been invaded or abridged? ”

“ Your words is a little bit too big for me, Mas’ Warren ” — the negro had not intended to lapse into old habits on this occasion, but he was too much interested now to remember to say “ Mr. Rhett ” instead of “ Mas’ Warren ” — “ but I think I make out your meanin’. You want to know what it is the folks is a complainin’ of. Well, for one thing, you come out to the stables ’bout daylight an’ you stan’ round to see the mules fed an’ curried, an’ then you go out to the fields an’ see the work started, an’ all day long you’re liable to turn up an’ keep it a goin’. You say we must ask permission if we want to lay off a day, and you see it’s jes’ like ole overseer times.”

“ I think I understand the gist of the grievance,” said Rhett. “ Having entered into a contract to render a year’s service as plantation laborers, for a stipulated wage, and for stipulated rations, house rent, et cetera, you and your folks — while ready enough to draw the rations and the wages —

object to my impertinence in insisting that you shall also do the work agreed upon. Isn't that about the size of it? "

" Well, sir, you see, if we is to be drove an' has to ask leave, we ain't free."

" I see," answered Rhett. Then adopting the Socratic method, he asked :

" What are you going to do about it, Isaac — you and the others? "

" Well, sir, they's to be a camp-meetin' beginnin' to-morrow, an' we've decided to be thar."

" Very well," answered Rhett, " I have no objection to that. But where do you purpose to go after the camp-meeting is over? "

" W'y, we'll come back home ag'in, of course."

Warren Rhett waited awhile before replying. Finally he said :

" Isaac, you had better go now and tell the folks that if they go on strike, as they are planning to do, — I mean if they quit the plantation for a single day in protest against my insistence upon honest work for honest pay, not one man, woman, or child of them shall ever come back so long as I live. Do you hear? "

"But Mas' Warren, we ain't got nowhere else to go. Whar else is we to live?"

"I really don't know," answered the young man. He paused to let the thought soak in as it were. Then he said:

"You and the rest are free, you know. You can go anywhere you please. But of course I am free too, and I tell you if you and the others quit work for camp-meeting or for anything else, you cannot come back to Mannamac, now or hereafter."

Isaac was in a daze. He could not understand. He could not see how it could be that men legally free could still be held to an obligation by any other man. In the meanwhile Robert had arrived and had modestly seated himself upon the steps, near his old playfellow and later benefactor, Warren Rhett. At the smallest hint from Rhett he took up the rôle of instructor to his fellow black man.

"Listen to me, Isaac," he commanded. "You and the rest of you do not understand what freedom means. Let me explain it a little. I am a free man, but when I get on board a railroad

train I must pay my fare. If I don't the conuactor will put me off, and serve me right, too. You and the rest of the folks are living on this plantation under contract to cultivate it. If you don't do your work you've no right to your wages, your rations, or your rent-free houses. Can't you understand that? Can't you understand that no man is free enough to get all that he thinks coming to him and give nothing in return? Your notion of freedom is all wrong. No man in all the world was ever free in the way you regard freedom. Here is our good friend Mas' Warren — if he will let me call him by the name that was dear to me in our boyhood days — even he isn't free in any such fashion as that. He is a rich man I hear — at any rate he is a prosperous one — and I'm glad of that — but even he cannot do as he pleases. He must respect the rights of others, and especially he must respect and fulfil his own obligations. He takes contracts to build railroads, dig tunnels, construct bridges, and the like. Do you imagine for a moment that he is free to leave his work undone and still expect the people on the other side to pay him what their contract

calls for? That isn't all of it. If he should refuse or neglect to do what he has agreed to do, the people on the other side of the contract would not only have the right to refuse to pay him anything — they could go into court and compel him to pay them damages for his failure to fulfil his obligations."

"For the Lawd's sake!" ejaculated Isaac, to whom this was a totally new view of human obligations.

"It is as I tell you," said Robert, "and it is time for you and others like you to try to understand what freedom and liberty mean. If you like I'll lecture to all of you on that subject and try to make you understand it. But in the meanwhile I strongly and earnestly advise you to do your duty like men, to fulfil your contract of work, and to obey the orders of a man who has a right to give orders at Mannamac."

"Well, for the Lawd's sake!" exclaimed Isaac as he shambled away. "An' Bob's a nigga' too! Well, who'd a thought it! I reckon may be, just, for safety like, us folks had better let the camp-meetin' be what they call 'slenderly attended.'"

After he had gone Colonel Forrest, the old Virginian planter, asked :

“ Don’t you think you are rather hard on the poor darkeys, Warren? ”

“ Yes, of course I am. But it is for their own good. It is the one thing needed — the one thing that will improve and upbuild the race. The trouble is that the rest of you do not recognize and insist upon the fundamental law of all progress — human and other.”

“ Just what do you mean by that, please? ” asked Hazel.

“ Well, my theory is based upon a law of nature. From the lowest to the highest forms of life — from the primordial germ to the ultimate development of human genius — from the polyp to the poet, from the oyster to the orator, from the stamen to the statesman — all progress is conditioned upon struggle, and due to it, directly. Without struggle there is no strenuosity and without strenuosity there is no advancement, no betterment, no development. In the case of human beings even more than in the case of lower forms of animated existence this necessity

is imperative, for the reason that human beings have mastered other secrets of survival than that of fitness. They know how to take unfair advantage of nature in a thousand ways that are impossible to plants and the lower animals.

“But the law of progress is absolutely inexorable. It is the law of a struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest — not necessarily the best, but those best fitted to survive under the conditions of the struggle. An unfair advantage counts for just as much as a fair advantage, and often the human being profits by it.”

“Just how do you mean?” asked Hazel, who seemed excitedly interested. “There is a thought behind that, or I am mistaken.”

“Yes, there is a thought behind that,” he answered. “But the thought is not mine. It is Alexander Von Humboldt’s. He characterized the banana as ‘the curse of the tropics,’ on the ground that it relieved tropical men of the necessity of work, of struggle, of enterprise of any kind. It is true, as he said, that the man who plants one banana-tree, by that act provides food for himself and his descendants to the tenth generation, in a

climate where clothes and shelter are not really necessary to comfort. The result is that having planted the banana-tree, the man excuses himself from all further work in the world, and his children do the same thing after him. Emerson has somewhere said that every man is as lazy as he dares be. That isn't quite true, but it suggests a truth of human nature. The man who has planted his banana-tree is apt to quit. His son and heir is apt to regard the paternal banana-tree as inheritance enough. In other words, ease of living is a paralyzing influence, a check upon endeavor, a ministry of indolence. Now knowing the negro as I do — having known him from my youth up — I am convinced that ease of living in this southern land of ours has been his curse, just as it is the curse of the poor whites. Their standards of living are low. Their wants are few, and they find it easy to supply them with very little effort. Consequently they make the minimum of endeavor, and you planters — by your indolent neglect of insistence — render the negro's problem of indolence easier. What I contend is that all this is excessively bad for the

negro, as it certainly is for the poor white. I hold that the negro or the poor white will never and can never advance in civilization till he shall — in the expressive slang of the time — be put ‘up against it.’ Not until he has to fight for his place in the world, will he amount to anything or achieve anything. At the north, and particularly in New York City, where rents are very high and must be paid on the first day of the month, the negro is constantly ‘up against it.’ He must pay his rent or get out. He must pay for his meats and his vegetables, or go without them. In a word he must hustle and he does so, and he is the better man for it. But here at Mannamac and on other plantations round about, no such conditions have prevailed. The negroes here have had no need to hustle. Their living has come to them easily. They can live whether they work or not. I think these conditions very unfortunate for them, and so far as I can I purpose to change them. I have the kindest possible feeling for the negroes —”

At that point Bob — or the Rev. Robert Ryman, D.D. — distinctly chuckled. Rhett,

thus interrupted in his discourse, asked, "What are you laughing at, Bob?"

"If I laughed it was unseemly," answered the man, "or at any rate my laughter only reflected my joy. Let me tell the gentlemen and gentlewomen here — you taught me to say gentlewomen instead of ladies, and the word is better — what I know of your attitude in this matter. I was born a slave — just about a year before Mr. Rhett was born. He and I played together and I want to say, he always played fair."

"Don't lay it on too thick, Bob," Rhett said, interrupting. "Remember that I still have some scraps and shreds of modesty left, and I really think you ought to spare them."

"As I was saying," said Bob, beginning where he had left off, "he always played fair. Well, he did more than that. He played more than fair. He sent me to school. After that he sent me to college. That was after he had to earn his own money by hard work, and the money didn't come easily either. He sent me to a preparatory school and then to Harvard, and now I want to tell you ladies and gentlemen something that he'll

never tell you, — no, Mas' Warren, you can't shut me up now " — this in response to a manifestation on Rhett's part — " he lived on tea and crackers in New York in order to give me my education. Sometimes he couldn't afford the tea and sometimes he couldn't afford the crackers, and once he pawned his own fraternity pin — it had a diamond in it — to help me make a man of myself. He wants me to shut up now, but I won't. I'm going to tell God all about all those things when the judgment-day comes and leave it to God to say what ought to be done to him on account of them."

The situation was emotionally strained. Hazel relieved it with a tact beyond measure. She rose from her chair and advanced to the negro, who was standing now and full of enthusiasm. She shook hands with him fervently and said:

"Thank you! Tell God all that when your chance comes. But now we want to hear your views about the education of negroes."

Her little speech gave time for the swallowing of lumps in several throats, and Robert was prompt to respond.

"Well, Miss Hazel," he said, using the Virginian negro's license to address any young woman by her first name with the respectful prefix of "Miss." "Well, Miss Hazel, that is the work I'm trying to do in the world, and naturally I've thought a good deal about it. But Mr. Rhett — I mean Mas' Warren, for he'll always be that to me — knows more about it than I do, and it is more fitting that he should speak. He and I have talked over the subject, and we are fully agreed regarding it. So let him speak in my stead."

"No," answered Rhett. "It's your turn to shoot, Robert, as we used to say when we played marbles. You have had practical experience in negro education — I have nothing better than theories."

"Well, I don't mind telling you what I think if you want to hear. I reckon you can't take a whole race of ignorant and half-developed people by the nape of the neck, and lift them up, and it seems to me that that's what people have been trying to do with the negroes.

"I reckon the average intelligence of any race,

the average morality, the average education, isn't very high. I reckon if you averaged it up on the east side of New York, or on the west side for that matter, you'd not find the level very high. I reckon if you averaged up the farmers of the north you'd get a rather low percentage of culture. And if you ruled out a few highly achieving individuals in each case, your average would be very much lower than it is. It is by virtue of a few individuals in each case that the average is kept up. Now I really suppose that the only thing to be done in any such matter is to give every man a chance, and to let the average take care of itself. As to the negroes, it is obvious that only here and there there is one of them capable of highly intellectual development. The fundamental trouble is misdirected endeavor—an effort to educate all alike, regardless of their individual capacities. There is a fetich in education as in most other things. If I understand the purpose of education it is to develop and cultivate each man's capacity, and to make the most of what he's fit for. What is good for one man in the way of education may be very bad for another. What

brings out and makes the most of one man's capacities may cripple the capacities of another man. The accepted theory of education is that all men should be taught the same things in the same way and out of the same books. It seems to me all wrong. It seems to me that some people could be best educated without any books at all. It seems to me a sad mistake to spoil a good carpenter trying to make a rhetorician of him. I have a clipping here from the *New York Sun* — a brilliant editorial — which sets forth some interesting historical facts and presents what I regard as the true philosophy of negro education better than I can do it. Miss Hazel, you've got better eyes than mine, would you mind reading it? "

Hazel took the clipping and standing close to one of the shaded lamps read aloud as follows:

CONCERNING NEGRO EDUCATION

It will perhaps astonish a great many complacent and unsuspecting persons in this part of the country to hear it said that a very considerable number, if not a majority, of the old-time great Southern slaveholders were heartily opposed to "the institution." Such is the truth, neverthe-

less, as every one familiar with the inner history of that section knows full well. There is no room for argument. When we enter the domain of imperishable fact we shake from our heels the dust of controversy. But a still more novel and disturbing truth is that long before the civil war certain Louisiana landowners of the magnificent, patriarchal type conceived a plan for "educating" their slaves, so wise, so enlightened, and, as it proved, so substantially beneficent, that modern paternalism could advantageously hark back to it at least in some particular respects.

To put it briefly, we may say that long before "Uncle Tom's Cabin" saw the light, and while as yet the great slaveholding magnates of the South regarded slavery as an establishment beyond the reach of social agitation or political vicissitude, wise and kindly members of the ruling class had conceived and set in operation a system whereby slavery could be robbed of all its most repulsive aspects and transformed into an agency of exaltation. They were not doctrinaires, these well-meaning men, but they loved their slaves and they felt it their duty, as it already was their earnest wish, to lift them out of the mire of degradation and subjection, if such a thing were possible. Thus it came about that schools were established on hundreds of plantations; nothing like our modern schools, of course, but just plain, simple agencies of experiment and observation. The idea was to disclose the special gift, proclivity, or talent of the individual, not to set up a Procrustes bed in the way of a smug curriculum. The idea

was to encourage and disclose any special talent and proclivity in the individual. The young were subjected to a benevolent and enlightened inquisition. There was no cut and dried formula of appraisement. The born artisan was not drilled to death in botany or ethics; the appointed cooper, mason, or blacksmith was not required to qualify as a pianist or a mathematician. Special gifts and tendencies were ascertained, developed, perfected. And so it followed that thousands of slaves became bricklayers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, engineers, sugar boilers, artisans of every kind, even musicians, and were permitted to pursue their vocations in perfect freedom, merely paying to their masters a small percentage on the assessed value of the individual. In all respects they were at liberty. They lived where they pleased, acquired their own homes, and accumulated their own properties, and in all these respects were protected by the law. It is a fact that the negro who dwelt under this dispensation, seventy-five years ago, enjoyed more actual freedom and received more substantial consideration than do his descendants of to-day, who strut about, inflated and misled by the worthless "education" of the latter-day public schools.

A detailed record of the fruits of this system would astound the philanthropists of the present generation. It is a fact, notwithstanding, that the slaveholders of the last century did more to uplift and help the negro than all the doctrinaires and societies and governments of our day are

doing or are likely to do; and that, considering the results in view, is a very inadequate and pallid statement of the case.¹

"There you have my view," said Warren Rhett. "I believe heartily in the education of the negro, but I do not at all believe in his mis-education. I once went through the establishment of Robert Hoe & Co., the greatest manufacturers of wonderfully complicated printing machinery in the world. They have to educate their own workmen. To that end they maintain a night-school, and in order that their two or three hundred boys may attend it, they give all of them supper at a restaurant every evening. The managing partner of that great firm once said to me in answer to a question:

" 'I'd rather have a boy with no education at all than a boy who has been graduated from the grammar school or from the high school.'

"When I asked him why, he told me, substantially this:

" 'The boy who has been through the schools

¹ This statement of historical fact, with its enlightening comment, is reprinted here with the generous permission of the editor of the *New York Sun*. — AUTHOR.

thinks of his employment here rather as a stepping-stone to something else, than as a lifelong occupation. He has been taught that he may become a Congressman after awhile — or a Senator or even President of the United States. From the very word “go” he treats his employment here as a temporary makeshift, while the boy who has had no education at all looks upon it as his life’s career, and proceeds to do the best he can to equip himself for it. If there is anything to be learned that will help him he struggles to learn it. If he has any special ability, he does his best to develop it with such aid as our school gives him. His ambition is to make of himself the very best workman he can in the establishment of Robert Hoe & Co., while the ambition of the school-educated boy who comes to us is, as soon as possible, to quit our service for something that he regards as higher and better.’

“Now,” continued Rhett, “there is much of this same kind of thing in the education of the negro. Men who ought to have been taught to do expert blacksmithing, have been taught instead to write worthless compositions. Boys

who ought to have been taught how to run engines, or how to plough or how to cultivate plants, have been taught paradigms instead. There is a good deal of the same thing done in the education of white boys, but it is especially conspicuous in negro education. Books are made the basis of it all, when the majority of the negro boys and girls have very little if any need of book learning, very little if any capacity for it. I stood on the docks at Savannah one day not long ago, and talked with a numerous company of negro boys and girls who were idling there. Every one of them had attended school, — some of them for as long as ten years, — but I could not discover one who had advanced beyond the first reader, or one who had any desire to do so. How much better it would have been to train those boys to some useful handicraft and to teach those girls the high art of good cooking! Such a training would have equipped them for useful work in the world. It would have secured to them the certainty of employment at good wages — the certainty of a prosperous and useful life, instead of the shiftless existence they are now destined to lead.”

“Then you think manual training and the like should take the place of scholastic instruction in negro schools?” asked Miss Bandon, who was an apostle of negro education.

“In a large degree, yes. Bob has told you how I educated him in the best schools and colleges there are in America. That was because he was intellectually fit for that sort of education. I am ready to do the same for a dozen others if Bob can find them for me. I doubt if there is another negro on this plantation who would be benefited by the kind of education Bob has received. That, however, isn’t the marrow of the matter. The book teaching in the schools is converted into the mere husks of learning, because it is not directed to any rational purpose. In Bob’s case the purpose was obvious and advantageous. He has brains and character, — he is fit to be a leader of his people, he knows their weaknesses and their strength, he knows their needs, and he is qualified by nature to think soundly. I helped him to educate himself because I was sure that in no other way could I render a better service to his race or to the country, and I am sure of that yet.

He is diligently engaged in teaching young negroes the things that it is best for them to learn, and in teaching their teachers how to teach them. I am so well pleased with his work that if a contract I have just taken proves half as profitable as I think it will, I am going to endow his school in a way that will enable him greatly to extend its usefulness."

"He is a greatly good man!" Hazel whispered to Kate, and Rhett overheard. By way of avoiding discussion of that subject, he made haste to add:

"It is my objection to socialism that its fundamental purpose is to excuse men from the struggle for existence, and in that way to rob them of the only effective incentive to endeavor. It is possible that under the paternal governance of a socialistic state a good deal of human suffering might be avoided; but it seems clear to me that under a system which should secure a comfortable living to every man, there could be no advancement, no progress, no race improvement, because under such conditions there would be no struggle and no necessity of struggle. The human race would

simply stagnate and degenerate. There would be an end of endeavor, an end of enterprise, an end of progress, because the very conditions that alone stimulate endeavor invite men to enterprise, and promote progress, would be no longer present in the world. Henry ” — calling to the dining-room servant — “ I wish you’d find Isaac to-night and tell him that if he’ll get the ploughing done down in the Cooper new grounds by noon to-morrow, or by two o’clock, he and all the rest of the field-hands shall have permission to attend the camp-meeting for two days. But tell him that any one of them who stays away longer, needn’t come back at all.

“ Miss Hazel, won’t you and Kate give us a little music now? ”

XVI

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

KATE accompanied on the guitar and Hazel sang to the delight of the company, while Rhett chafed sorely under the restraint that the presence of company imposed. He wanted to talk with Hazel. He wanted to draw from her the information that Kate had refused to give him, while she at the same time urged upon him a course that would be simply impossible if her statement of the case was correct.

If it had been anybody other than Kate who had told him that Hazel was already a married woman and then had urged him to win her in spite of the fact, saying that the marriage didn't amount to much anyhow, — if it had been anybody other than Kate, he would have decided without hesitation that there must be some other fact which opened a way out. But with Kate as his inform-

ant the case was far more perplexing. It was Kate's habit of mind to have her own way. Rhett perfectly understood that if Kate wished him to make Hazel his wife, as she obviously did, Kate would not pay much heed, in her mind, to any legal or social or conventional obstacles that might stand in the way. It could never be made clear to Kate's inconsequent intelligence that the people she loved should be in any measure restricted in their liberty of action, in any degree restrained by obligations. "I want it so," was quite enough for her. She had always had the things she wanted, and it was therefore impossible for her to understand, in any case, why she should not have what she wanted. In this case she very earnestly wanted Warren Rhett to marry Hazel Cameron. The trifling fact that for some unexplained reason the law forbade that made no impression upon Kate's mind.

Knowing this temper of hers, Warren Rhett could not conclude, as he would have done under other circumstances, and with some informant less erratic and wilful than Kate, that the alleged marriage and wifehood of the woman he loved

were in some fashion a fiction, a myth that could be dismissed from consideration. Knowing Kate as he did, he took seriously her first statement that Hazel was already married, and he attached very little importance to her suggestion that the marriage amounted to nothing. He knew that that would be Kate's view of anything that might stand in the way of the fulfilment of her desires.

Obviously it was necessary that he should challenge the facts at Hazel Cameron's hands, and he was exceedingly impatient of conditions that prevented or postponed that challenge.

At last the evening was done, the carriages were ordered, and one after another the guests departed. Even Danforth asked for his horse and pleaded, as his excuse for leaving, the necessity of an early appointment at his office.

This was an additional grievance to Warren Rhett. It interfered with the plans he had suddenly formed, but he resolved to carry out those plans in spite of circumstances.

As the last of the guests left, the late rising moon crept up above the tree-tops of the woodlands to the east, and without even consulting his

watch, Rhett directed Henry to "order the horses."

"We'll ride in this glorious night-time," he said to Hazel. "You will chaperon us, Kate — I had hoped that Charley would make a fourth."

"Two are company," answered Kate, "and three constitute a crowd. Besides that, I don't approve of chaperons. Their presence is an insult to both the man and the woman who are supposed to be watched. And then again the bread has been distinctly below grade for three mornings."

"What on earth has the bread to do with it, Kate?" asked Hazel, in an astonishment that she ought not to have felt — knowing Kate as she did.

"Oh, it's only that I'm going to supervise its mixing to-night, just as Warren does things on the plantation — to see that it is done right. So you two are to go for a ride, and I'll have the bread right in the morning."

With that benediction the two set off. They galloped for half a mile, chiefly because their horses — stabled all day — delighted in the ex-

ercise. Then they fell into a walk and presently the young man said to the girl:

"I want you to tell me all about yourself — I have a right to ask — the right of a man who wants to make you his wife."

"I'm sorry," she said, and she put whip to her horse by way of preventing further conversation for a space. They galloped for another half-mile. Then she realized — or perhaps she had realized it before — that his words to her had been such as a woman must answer. At her instigation the horses slowed down to a walk, and presently she said:

"I had rather tell you that story by daylight at Mannamac — so that I may tell it calmly and judiciously, and not under the inspiration of a night ride and the moonlight. Sometimes the moonlight affects me strangely. It induces a certain exaltation of spirit which prompts me to throw discretion to the winds."

"That is precisely what I want," said Rhett. "I want you to tell me your life-story at a time when impulse and not discretion is dominant. So tell me the story now."

"It is a long story," she said, deprecatingly.

"We have good horses under us," he replied, "and we have all the night before us — all the night for the telling and the hearing. But tell me first — are you or are you not a married woman?"

"I am, and I am not," she replied. "Only the story can explain that."

"Tell me the story, then."

"It would be easier for me to tell it at Manna-mac in the daytime."

"I dare say it would. But I want to hear it now. Go on and tell it, please."

The girl waited a moment before speaking. Then she said:

"You are *so* like my father."

"Just how do you mean?" he asked.

"Why — I hardly know — but you have a commanding way, just as he had. Whatever you order must be done. In his case I always liked to do what he wanted."

"In my case it is different?"

"I do not say that," she answered; and there she stopped speaking, leaving it to him to revive

the conversation. She had a habit of doing that sort of thing, and usually Rhett rejoiced in it. But just now it embarrassed him.

“What is it then that you mean to say?”

“Only what I have said,” she answered. Then suddenly she changed her tone and her attitude, and — almost as if bursting into tears — she threw out her hand and took possession of his, saying:

“It is a terrible story, Mr. Rhett. You have been good to me ever since I have known you, and I ought to tell you of all this now, because you wish it. But please let it go over till to-morrow. Please give me a little time! Please wait! The very motion of the horses disturbs my thinking, and I must tell this story right whenever I tell it at all. Would you mind galloping now and toward Mannamac?”

The emotion of the girl was manifest, and Rhett was very tenderly touched by it. Pressing the hand he held in his own, he said:

“Everything shall be as you wish. So far as I am able to control affairs everything on earth shall be as you wish always. I love you, Hazel.

I don't know whether I have a right to tell you so or not, — that depends upon what the story is, — but I take the right. Whatever the condition of things may be, I love you, and I shall do all that is in my power to compel circumstances to your will."

The girl rode on in silence — for the gallop she had suggested as a means of relieving the emotional strain had not yet begun. He waited awhile for some answer from her, but no answer came. It was not Warren Rhett's habit to wait long, without taking active measures to secure his answer. So presently he broke the silence:

"I have told you, Hazel, that I love you. Have you no answer to make? Do you love me?"

"I am not free to answer that question," she said. "Wait, wait, wait! You shall know tomorrow what my situation is. Then you shall take whatever answer you think best. I love you so well, so wholly, so utterly, that I place all things in your hands — myself and my life — and my future and my past. But you must first know the story in order that you may judge

wisely. I'll tell you all of it to-morrow. I can't now. Let's run our horses!"

And they did, with the result that they speedily parted in the great hall of Mannamac house — Hazel hurrying up the stairs, to escape from a presence which she felt to be a benediction, but at the same time a danger, and he lighting a pipe by way of calming his perturbed spirit.

XVII

KATE'S DIPLOMACY AND MUSHROOMS

WITH all her seeming inconsequence of thought, Kate Rhett was a woman of exceeding sagacity. She knew how to "put two and two together," though she was apt to be a trifle uncertain as to whether two and two made three or four.

Hazel said not one word to her that night with respect to what had occurred between herself and Warren Rhett, but Kate thought she understood. There was something of perturbation in the manner of both on their return to Mannamac, and Hazel hastily retired to her room after kissing Kate "good night." Kate argued that the two had not yet "had the thing out," — a conclusion in which she was confirmed by the fact that Warren, instead of going to bed at midnight — his customary hour — walked the porch for half the remainder of the night — smoking incessantly,

as she was able to determine by the fact that frequently she heard the click of his pipe upon the edge of the jar she had provided as a receptacle for ashes.

"They're going to fight the thing out to-morrow," she argued, "and I must take myself out of the way."

So Kate left her bed at five o'clock and made a personal inspection of the bread that she had set overnight. Deciding that it needed half an hour more of "rising" before being kneaded, she set to work to write a note to her intimate friend, Hallie Harvey, who lived on a neighboring plantation. The "note" covered sixteen pages of deckel-edged letter-paper, of course, but the gist of it was embraced in a paragraph which ran as follows:

"You must send for me at once. It mustn't be by my messenger, but by one of your own, and he must get here at breakfast-time. You see, if you used my messenger, they would suspect collusion, and that's like the leaven refusing to raise your bread, or raising it too soon. It is curious about cooks and bread. I suppose you

have the same experience. Every three weeks — or is it every six, I declare I forget which it is — my cook begins to run down in her bread and I have to teach her all over again how to make it. It's very provoking, isn't it? You'd think it was easy and simple and all that sort of thing, but you know they forget, and my cook actually sent in the roe herrings horribly overdone a few mornings ago. Hazel and Warren were awfully nice about it, saying that 'occasionally' they liked them done that way, but all the same it is provoking.

"As I was saying, you must send me a summons to come to you at once and for the day. I don't suppose it will take them more than one day to talk the thing out. Your message *must* get here while we're at breakfast. You can easily arrange it. You can have a new bonnet, or a headache, or a bad liver, or a lawsuit, or even a fever, that you want to consult me about. Anyhow you must *want to consult me*, and you must want me *as soon after breakfast as possible*, so that I can excuse myself at once. I'll leave Hazel to dry the breakfast things, and he can stay and talk with her. I mean Warren, of course. I think a woman never

looks so fascinating to a man as when she is sitting, queen-like, drying the breakfast things. I have tried hard to think out why but I can't. It's a fact, however, so don't fail to send me a peremptory summons to come to you just as soon after breakfast as possible. And by the way, I want you to see Hazel in her new gown, so if you don't mind, I'll bring you back with me to dinner. They're sure to be through talking the thing out by that time, don't you think?"

Hallie Harvey was a woman of responsive humor in all ways, so she promptly dismissed Kate's little darkey and wrote the desired summons, sending it by a servitor of her own, with instructions to deliver it between nine and half-past nine of the clock.

"I want you to come to me," she wrote, "as soon as you have drunk one cup of coffee. I'll give you a second cup, if you want it. I'm in all sorts of trouble. That Baltimore milliner has sent me a hat so beautiful in itself that I long to wear it, but so out of harmony with the color scheme of my new gown that I can't. I'm simply in despair. A misfit suitor couldn't give me half so

much trouble. Come to me at once, I pray you."

Then, wise woman that she was, she added a postscript, saying:

"Of course Hazel will look after things at Mannamac for the day. Now that Mr. Rhett is there, the plantation can't be left even for a day without a woman in presence. Men have no use or tolerance for Edens with no Eves in them. But, if you don't mind, you're going to take me back with you to Mannamac for dinner and the night, so I'll see Hazel then and we'll talk chiffon without limit. Men always have new stories to tell each other; we women must content ourselves with a talk of new rags. But the main thing is that you must come over at the very earliest moment possible — just as soon as you can decently quit the breakfast-table. If you don't I vow I'll go away somewhere, look up a comely coachman, and ask him to run away with me."

Without a hint that she had by her own initiative induced this urgent letter of invitation, Kate read it aloud at the breakfast-table, and the "consensus of opinion" was entirely unanimous

that she must order the carriage at once and go to her friend with the least possible delay.

If any cynic is disposed to suggest that women are not without guile, he may be reminded that their guile is in itself guileless, and is instigated — in many cases at least — by considerations of the happiness of others. Who would harshly condemn the subterfuges and kindly deceptions of Christmas conspirators?

However that may be, no such ethical questions presented themselves to Kate's mind. If they had done so she would have dismissed them as the grossest of impertinences. She wanted things arranged for the day as she had planned, so that Hazel and Warren might "talk their talk out." The fact that she wanted it so was quite all of justification her self-contained conscience required.

She hurriedly ordered the carriage; she hurriedly dressed herself for the day's visit, and she hurriedly left Hazel in charge at Mannamac — placing the key basket in her hands and saying:

"Now, dear, I must leave it to you to order what you think best for dinner. This hurried and

passionate appeal from Hallie for counsel and assistance has upset me so, you know, that I can't think of anything. Just order what you think best. Only remember that Hallie will be with us at dinner, and Charley is pretty certain to come. There's a roast of beef in the ice-box, and a young turkey, and a pair of ducks, and some broiling chickens; and of course there's a shoat in the ice-house, or half of one, and — ”

“ For heaven's sake, Kate, stop. You're not going to entertain a regiment of troopers or a battalion of artillerymen. You've catalogued enough food for either of such occasions. I shall have a due regard to circumstances. I shall plan and serve strictly a studio dinner — what the French call a ‘ little dinner,’ and if you don't like it your guests will. The carriage is waiting for you. Go ! ”

For the sake of compact completeness it should here be recorded that with the exception of the *pièce de résistance* Hazel cooked that dinner herself — greatly to the consternation and disgust of the negro queen of the kitchen. The weather was feeling a touch of autumn coolness now, so

that there was a brisk wood fire in the dining-room, by aid of which, and with the assistance of a chafing-dish, the girl prepared all the dishes, other than the roast, with a skill acquired by long years of living in a studio where the make-shift was the masterpiece in the art of dining.

But in the meanwhile, during the day, she had told Warren Rhett the first part, at least, of the story that explained it all — the story of her own life, and in the light of it he had watched her preparation of the dinner with an interest so eager and a disposition so aggressively helpful that on two or three occasions he came near spoiling results.

Nevertheless he was really helpful, in his clumsy, manly fashion.

"I wish I had some mushrooms that I could be sure were not toadstools," she said, as she began to prepare for the fray.

"Come with me," he said in his commanding way, "and we will find some." Their day's converse was over by that time — or rather it had been interrupted by the coming of Isabel Bandon, and the effect of it upon Warren Rhett

had been to make him a more imperiously dictatorial personage than ever.

"Very well," Hazel answered submissively. "I suppose you know edible from poisonous mushrooms with as much certainty as you know everything else that you profess to know at all."

"Do you mean that as an accusation of arrogance and self-conceited assumption?" he asked.

"Not at all. I have a great — even a reverent — admiration of the way in which you know things. I was thinking only of that. I didn't know you knew how to distinguish edible from poisonous mushrooms, but I ought to have understood that of course you knew. Come on, Isabel."

"Not at all," he answered. "It is by pure accident that I know anything about it — pure accident. May I tell you the story?"

"Certainly. I shall be delighted to hear it and so will Isabel." The three were walking in the pastures now.

"Well, at one time, when business opportunities had not opened themselves to me in any very satisfactory way, I used to write a little for the newspapers — not regular articles, you know, or

news revelations or anything of that sort, but just odds and ends and chatter. One day I took my lunch, as I often did, at Sutherland's in Liberty Street. He had the best cold roast beef in the world, because he nursed it week after week into perfection. He had everything else in perfection, too, from old Virginia hams to cutlets of wild boar from the Black Forest in Germany. His specialty was knowing how to handle food products in a way to make the most and the best of them. While I was lunching there that day, my attention was attracted by two great colored charts that hung on the wall, the one purporting to show every detail of the edible mushroom, the other every detail of the poisonous varieties. He explained to me, in answer to my questions, that he had imported these two carefully colored charts from Vienna, with a public-spirited intent. It had been his plan to have lithographic copies made of them, and to hang them on the walls of every school in New York State. 'Thousands of tons,' he said to me, 'of food as nutritious as beefsteak itself go to waste every day, simply because people don't know about mushrooms.

They don't know one variety from another — the edible from the poisonous — and worst of all, they don't know how to handle them. I imported those charts, in the hope that by furnishing copies of them to all the public schools in the State, I might be instrumental in teaching the children of the State how to save this wealth of nutritious food. But the school-teachers had grammar to teach, and geography and rhetoric and all the rest of it, and so they couldn't be bothered to learn and teach mushrooms. It is the old story. The schools busy themselves with the husks of learning and have no time left for anything that has juice in it.'

"The thing seemed to me to furnish good material, so I wrote and printed an article, in which I told the story of the restaurateur's effort, at his own expense, to benefit the people, and of the way in which conventionalism had defeated his purpose. A little later I was taking luncheon there again, when Sutherland came to me and bade me eat slowly, for the reason that he had something in preparation that he wanted me to eat. Presently he brought me a dish of stewed

mushrooms, and while I ate of it I asked him what the mushrooms were. He replied, 'There are eleven varieties in the dish, and every one belongs in the poisonous class.' Then he explained, citing, as an illustration of his meaning, the manioc root, the juice of which is so poisonous that even a whiff from it, inhaled through the nostrils, will kill almost instantly; while when it is set in the sun and allowed to evaporate it leaves as a residuum that most innocent of food stuffs, tapioca. In the same way, he said, all mushrooms may be made innocuous by proper handling. All are edible except that a few varieties have an unpleasant flavor. The incident led me to study the subject a little. I mastered his charts and then I bought Gibson's book on the subject, and with the aid of that I made myself so far an expert that you may confidently serve to us any fungus growth that I commend to you."

"It is all very wonderful," said Hazel.

"About the mushrooms?" he asked.

"No. About you."

XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF HAZEL'S STORY

THE talk about mushrooms and all the rest of it occurred in the afternoon, long after Hazel had told her story, or a part of it, to Warren Rhett. That story was told, so far as it was told at all, before an open fire in the great drawing-room, partly because — although the mushrooms were still growing in the pasture lands, — there was a chill of autumn in the air, and partly because Hazel preferred to tell the story under cover of drawn curtains and with only the flickering firelight for an accompaniment.

“Nothing about me has ever been regular,” she said, “or what would be called respectable. I was born in a studio, I suppose. At any rate my father and mother lived in a studio when I was born, and if they had any more regular dwelling-place I never heard of it.”

Here the girl stopped and taking from a vase some of the late-blooming honeysuckles, she proceeded to fasten them upon the lapel of Rhett's coat. Presently she resumed :

“ After the wild, mad things I said to you last night — that I and my life and everything else were yours to do with as you pleased — I needn't hesitate to pay you a tribute of flowers, I suppose. I am not instructed in such matters. I have had no education — no proper bringing up. I have never lived in society. I don't know what is proper and what isn't — but I know when my own impulses are really right, even though they be conventionally wrong, and my impulse now is to pin honeysuckles on your coat lapel because you are the great, generous, broad-minded man that you are ! ”

This speech, and the act accompanying it, were obviously nothing more than subterfuges, meant to cover the emotional disturbance of the girl at thought of telling her life story. Rhett understood, and for reply he said :

“ Conventionalities are nothing more than rules made for people who, without them, would go



"I NEEDN'T HESITATE TO PAY YOU A TRIBUTE OF FLOWERS,
I SUPPOSE." — *Page 256.*

wrong — ignorant people, ill-disposed people. Persons of real intelligence and refinement are no more bound by them than authors of high repute are bound by the rules laid down in schoolbooks of rhetoric.”

“Thank you,” said Hazel, and she at once resumed her story.

“My father was a sculptor, a man of genius I know, but a man who could never manage his own business affairs in such fashion as to keep himself out of debt. I never knew my mother. She died so soon after my birth that I do not remember her at all. I was brought up in the studio, without any woman to attend me or instruct me. Sometimes we lived in New York — my father and I — sometimes in Paris or Milan or Florence or Rome. It all depended upon the commissions my father could get. I suppose I got such instruction as I got at all mainly from the people who visited the studio, and they were of many kinds. Some of them were artists, some of them vulgar rich people, some of them art lovers of refinement and cultivation. They all made much of me — perhaps because I was a poor

little motherless girl. At any rate they talked with me a great deal. From them and the street children I learned French and Italian, not regularly, you know, but in a pickup way, so that I speak both those languages more fluently than correctly.

“In the meanwhile I was learning something of art, partly from my father and partly by incessant contact with it, together with ceaseless talk about it. I used to model a good deal in clay, but that had to be only in the way of figurines and miniature busts, because I wasn’t physically strong enough to handle larger pieces. Besides, I had no real gift. Like most other sculptors, my father sometimes painted, and I took to that eagerly. I learned a good deal about the technique of it, and especially about how to produce color effects, though I had no regular instruction. If I had possessed any real artistic ability I might have become a successful painter. As it was I learned all the tricks of painting, so that afterwards I was able to earn my living by it, as I shall tell you presently. But I could never become a real artist, of course, because I have no gift.”

“Will you pardon me if I do not agree with

you? In my opinion those two horse pictures that hang in the hall out there seem to me to suggest a very genuine gift."

"But your judgment is not a well-informed one. Those pictures have an intensity that pleases, a certain passion of endeavor and triumph, and the coloring is good. But does it occur to you that such pictures must be measured with Rosa Bonheur's 'Horse Fair,' if they are to be properly judged as works of art?"

"Yes," he answered with emphasis, "and I have made that comparison. The result of it is altogether in favor of your pictures. The 'Horse Fair' is the most overvalued picture in existence. It is a pleasing work, of course, but so are many thousands of other paintings. It is overvalued because it is the work of a woman. Those who look upon it say, 'That is a wonderful picture for a woman to have painted!' After a little while they say, 'That is a wonderful picture,' and they leave off the qualifying clause. I do not think the picture really great. I think its reputation is largely based upon the fact that a woman painted it, and is, in effect, a reflection upon

women as inferior to men. It is as if one should exhibit a work done by a child and challenge admiration of it upon the ground that it was the production of a ten-year-old. Anyhow, I am going to subject critical judgment to a test."

"How?"

"By offering those two horse pictures of yours as a gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It is my conviction that they are in all respects superior to Rosa Bonheur's 'Horse Fair,' but as they bear no distinguished name, as that does, the committee may perhaps reject them. At any rate, I purpose to put the committee 'up against it' and to find out how much the members of it really know about pictures. The truth is, we have no such thing as competent criticism, either of art or of letters in this country. Let me tell you an illustrative story. When William Hamilton Gibson published one of his masterfully illustrated books, the most pretentious and the most highly esteemed art critic of the time assailed it bitterly. He was the man who had challenged the genuineness of some of the collections in the Museum of Art itself. He said in print of Gibson's book that

Mr. Gibson was sailing under false colors; that his work was not his own in that part of it that deserved praise; that he was indebted, for all that was of real value in his pictures, to the engraver, whom he named and who, he went on to declare, had 'added increment after increment of value to the drawings.' Now it happened that there had been no engraver concerned with the pictures in any way. They were slavish, photographic reproductions of Gibson's drawings, but the very eminent critic knew so little of art that he could not distinguish between a wood-engraving and a photogravure. But pardon me, I am interrupting your story, and I want to hear it."

"The interruption helps," she replied. "It gives me courage and time to breathe, and I need both. As I was saying, I learned the technique of painting so well that I can always go into the little picture-shops in New York and sell pot-boilers for from two dollars to twenty-five dollars apiece. When I was getting to be a tall girl my father married again — marrying a woman whom I detested — for reasons. I made up my mind that I would not live in the

studio, and she, I suppose, made up her mind that I should not. At any rate my father decided to send me to a school not far from Baltimore. That is where I got the only regular schooling I have ever had. There I met Kate and we became chums, though I was several years younger than she was. I needed a mother and she mothered me. She needed a pet and I answered the purpose far better than a kitten would have done. So we became intimates, for two years, or nearly that.

“Then my father died suddenly, and after that of course there was nobody to pay for keeping me in the school. Besides that I knew I was learning nothing there that could do me any good. I knew French and Italian a great deal better than my teachers did. I had learned music in Paris and Milan, and there wasn’t anything else to learn in a school like that, where nothing was taught but frills.

“At first I didn’t know what to do. Kate wanted me to come down here to Mannamac, and live with her. You see that was just after she was married to your father, and as soon as she heard

of my father's death she hurried to the school — dear good girl that she is — to arrange things for me. I came down here for a month or two — just to rest and think. Then I decided to go to New York and make my own living as best I could.

“ There was a gentlewoman there whom I had known in the old studio days. She taught music, and she was poor. She and I together took a little studio flat in an old, ramshackle building where we lived together very inexpensively. We depended, for our food, mainly upon the delicatessen shops, where we could buy five cents' worth at a time, when our purses were nearly empty, or, when they happened to be full, could buy the most delicious roast chicken and make a half-dollar supper for the two of us. We were specially fond of pigs' feet, and we used to buy them, breaded, and broil them in a little gas-stove we had in the flat.

“ Really we lived a jolly life, poor as we were, and it had the saving salt of independence — the very best condiment I have ever yet known.”

“ I understand,” he said, “ and I sympathize

with your thought. I have dined happily on crackers, many a time, with two or three dinner invitations lying on my table, each of which meant canvas-back duck and Philadelphia squab and lobster a la Newburg, and everything else that gastronomic extravagance can pack between oysters or little neck clams at the start, and black coffee and cigars at the end. I have had to decline such invitations to preserve my independence and my self-respect. Indeed in those hard times, when I ate each meal not knowing where the next was to come from or when it was to come, I made it a rigid rule never to accept a dinner invitation unless I had the price of a dinner in my own pocket. That makes all the difference between the self-respecting gentleman and the pauper."

"I agree with you in principle," she said, "but it hurts me to think you ever had to go hungry. It doesn't matter so much in the case of a woman."

"But why not? Why isn't the comfort of a woman quite as important as that of a man?"

"I don't know. But it isn't."

"I think you are wrong. But please go on with your story. I swear by all the gods in all the

pantheons that you shall never again suffer lack of food in that way while I live."

"Oh, we didn't go hungry. It was only that sometimes we could have the things we liked and all we liked of them, while at other times we had to put up with things we didn't like or with a little less than we wanted of things that we liked very much."

She gave a little laugh and added :

"I remember the only quarrel she and I ever had. It was over a hard-shell crab. We had ordered in seven live ones, meaning to eat three apiece and leave one for manners or in case either of us should be hungry during the night. We were very short of money just then and we hadn't had anything but a very little weak coffee for breakfast that day, but I had sold a little picture during the afternoon for three dollars, so we decided to feast royally. Just before dinner we learned that the little woman who lived in the attic room above us had no dinner and no money with which to buy or e. So we invited her in to eat crabs with us. That left us only two crabs apiece and one over, and really two crabs don't make a very

heartly dinner for a woman who has had no breakfast and no luncheon. It was too late in the evening when we dined to go out and buy anything else. So we contented ourselves with the two crabs apiece. After our guest had gone to her room we quarrelled over that other crab. I wanted my friend to eat it and she wanted me to do so, each knowing very well that the other was still hungry. We quarrelled bitterly, but after awhile we settled the dispute by sending the crab up to the woman who had dined with us, feeling sure that she was hungrier than either of us. We learned afterward that the elevator boy, by whose hands we had sent it, had eaten the crab upon receiving no answer to his knock upon the woman's door."

Hazel laughed as she recalled the incident. Rhett was not moved to laughter.

"It hurts me," he said with a note of intense feeling in his voice, — "it hurts me to think of you living under such conditions of privation."

"Oh, it wasn't bad at all. That sort of living was really what we used to call 'very jolly.' At first I found it rather hard to make a living. The

little picture-dealers wouldn't buy my pot-boiling pictures, and when I left them to be sold on commission they didn't sell. But by inquiring and observing I soon found out what the trouble was. I was too truthful in my coloring. The people who buy cheap little pictures in big gilt frames to serve as decorations for their houses or as presents to their friends who are furnishing flats, are fond of high colors, drawn mainly from the warmer end of the spectrum. They want intense reds, oranges, and yellows. I tested the thing. I took two little landscapes which the dealer had found it impossible to sell, and 'touched them up.' I put more red into the sunsets than properly belonged there and more orange and more yellow into the landscapes than any landscape on earth ever presented. The two pictures were snapped up before night, and the dealer actually hunted me up to ask for more, in view of the approach of Christmas. After that I had no trouble in selling pot-boilers. I could paint one in a forenoon, and sell it before night for from two to ten dollars, according to its size and the intensity of the reds and yellows in it.

"About that time I began furnishing and decorating houses, or, more accurately speaking, directing the furnishing and decorating. Here again I had to be — not dishonest, but insincere. If the owner of a house wants it decorated in primary colors, of course there is no dishonesty in buying for him the sort of thing he likes; but to one with any color sense, there is in it a certain consciousness of insincerity."

"I quite understand the distinction," Rhett said. "But there is also a certain insincerity in talk sometimes."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, you know perfectly well that you are at this moment talking against time, in order to postpone as long as possible the telling of those things that you set out to tell me."

The girl went to a window and looked out. She stood there for a full minute which seemed an hour to Rhett, who feared he had offended her. At last she returned to her seat and said:

"You are entirely right. I have been talking against time and trying to postpone the telling of a story that it is very painful for me to tell.

But believe me I have not intended that insincerity. It is as if I were going to take a cold plunge-bath. I do that every morning, of course, but I always shrink from it for a time, though I know all the while how great a refreshment it will be to me."

"I understand," he said. "But remember, you are not to tell me anything that it will distress you to tell."

"Yes, I am, too. If I tell you anything, I must tell you everything, and after — well, after what I said to you last night, I *must* tell you.

"It was about that time that I began to paint horses. I did it for love of it. I painted the two pictures you have bought and hung in the hall out there. They made a sort of reputation for me, and I got a number of commissions at once to paint horse portraits."

Here the girl rose from her seat, and, without apology of any kind, went out into the grounds to choke back the emotions that rendered her incapable of further speech. Rhett sat still for a time. Then he strolled out into the great colonnaded porch and seated himself there in the sun-

shine which was rapidly taking the chill out of the air. Presently Hazel returned, seated herself by his side and resumed her discourse.

“I suppose that every horse lover in New York occasionally visits the sumptuous barroom from which you bought those two pictures. I am told that it is a favorite resort for betting men. I don’t know, and it doesn’t matter. At any rate a good many horse owners who saw the pictures there came to me with commissions to paint portraits of their horses. I went to their stables or paddocks and made the pictures. It isn’t nice for me to say it, but I’m telling you everything — every man of them, with one exception, made love to me or tried to do so — married men with the rest — until I became disgusted and afraid, and decided to refuse the commissions.”

“The brutes!” he exclaimed.

“It is unjust to well-behaved brutes to call such men so,” she answered, meditatively. “However, I was obliged to protect myself by declining commissions and setting to work on pot-boilers again. But after a time there came to me a commission from a gentleman. His name was Ed-

ward Cameron — his last name being the same as my own. He was the son of a family of considerable wealth, and he was rich in his own right, but he had not acquired the vicious habits of misthinking which wealth so often engenders. He did not come to me in person until he had respectfully sent his mother and his sister to arrange for an interview. His mother was a charming old lady. His sister was much older than himself, and I did not particularly like her.

“They explained to me that the young man had a horse of peculiar beauty, and emphasized the fact that the animal’s coloring was unique, so that no portrait of him could be satisfactory unless painted by an artist of special gifts in the matter of coloring. Mr. Cameron had seen my two horse portraits and was satisfied that I was the person he wanted to paint a picture of his horse, ‘in action.’

“I told them frankly that I had given up horse painting, and I told them frankly why. They recognized the validity of my reasons, and seemed to be pleased with my attitude in the matter. But by way of meeting my scruples they volun-

teered the assurance, first, that Edward Cameron was a gentleman who would always treat me with respect, and secondly, that whenever it should be necessary for me to visit his horse, either at the stable or upon a track, one or the other of them would accompany me.

“A little later the young man himself came to the studio, accompanied by his mother. He was courteous, gentlemanly, even deferential to my womanhood, and he earnestly urged me to undertake the commission. He was good enough to think there was no other painter in New York who could reproduce the peculiar coloring of the horse so well as I could.

“I asked to see the horse, and the young man and his mother drove me to their place in the more rural part of Westchester. The horse was quite all that they had said, both as to his perfection of form and action, and as to his coloring. Large, powerful, and shapely, he was as beautiful of form as Dolly Varden herself. But his coloring was peculiar — unique, in fact. Certainly I have never seen anything remotely like it. Beneath the surface his color was a rich red bay —

almost a sorrel — but the surface — especially on his sides — was flecked all over with little patches of gray roan, which seemed to be superimposed upon the redder hair beneath, but which were in fact a part of that hair — composed of the outer ends of it, which bore a color different from that beneath. It was like a pattern painted upon a background. I don't think I can make you understand, because there was never another horse like that in all the world, but to one who rejoices in difficult color effects, he was the most tempting subject of portraiture imaginable.

“ Well, I accepted the commission. I examined the horse minutely in his paddock, studying his form and color with the utmost care, and making both form and color notes on some cardboard. Then I took some time to think of him and of how I might best reproduce his beauty on canvas, for I was determined that his portrait should be a picture to base at least a little reputation upon. Then one day we all went out to a beautiful stretch of country road and we three women sat in a carriage by its side, while the young man speeded his superb horse back and forth past us,

I making what I call 'notes,' all the while. We did this on many days — not successive, but once or twice a week for many weeks.

"In the meanwhile I had come to know Edward Cameron well, and to like him more than I had ever liked any other young man. I know *now* that I was not in love with him, but at that time I thought I was. That was because I then didn't know what love is like. His mother had me often to dinner and to drive with her, and sometimes to pass the night at her house, while after I began actually to paint the picture, the three were in the studio for hours every day, watching me slowly work out its details.

"In that way I came to know Edward Cameron more and more intimately, and to like him more and more. As I have already said, I was not in love with him, as I now understand what love means, but I liked him more than I had ever liked anybody else. His courtesy, his kindness, his deference — everything that marked his manner was pleasing. So when he one day asked me to be his wife, I consented, upon condition that his mother should approve. It was a cold-blooded

response, I know now; but at that time I didn't know."

The girl rose from her seat and walked out into the grounds. Warren Rhett sat still. He thought he understood, and perhaps he did. After a while she came back and, standing, said with vehemence :

" You must not misunderstand me, Warren ! " — it was the first time she had ever addressed him by his first name — " You must not misunderstand me. That man had offered me marriage, and I thought then that I loved him. That was because I had not yet learned what love means, so that I mistook a cordial liking, mingled with a profound respect, for love. I respected him so much and I so cordially liked him that I was entirely willing to become his wife with his mother's approval, but not otherwise. Think what such a marriage would have meant ! But I didn't know then.

" One day he came to visit the studio, and found the ramshackle old building in flames. A hurried inquiry revealed to him that I was still in the studio, or at least that I had not been ' accounted

for,' as the newspapers say. In fact, both the woman with whom I lived on the twelfth floor, and I, had been partially suffocated by the smoke and were lying unconscious in the hallway when he came. For — brave fellow that he was — when he found that the elevator boys had in terror abandoned their duty he seized upon an elevator and ran it up through the suffocating smoke and the blinding flames. He rescued half a dozen of us, carrying us in unconsciousness into the car and laying us like logs upon the floor. Then, himself in semi-asphyxiation, he started the car on its descent. Meanwhile the flames had reached the roof, and something in the machinery up there gave way, letting the elevator car drop suddenly. I was unconscious at the time, and for hours afterward, but I learned later that while we women who were lying prone upon the floor of the car were not seriously injured by the fall, the brave young fellow who had rescued us from the flames was violently thrown backwards and terribly hurt, both in his head and internally.

“He was hurriedly taken to the New York Hospital, where his injuries were tenderly cared

for by the surgeons. By that time his mother had secured a private room for him in the hospital and had sent for three of the most eminent men in the profession to attend him. Many days passed before he was sufficiently recovered to begin to have wants. By that time I was quite myself again, thanks to the tender care of his mother, to whose home I had been taken.

“ His first want was to see me, and I went with his mother to see him, every day when the doctors would permit the visit. Sometimes they forbade it, because of a fever that beset him.

“ At last he was given up to die. The doctors could not, or would not, say positively that he must die, but they equally refused to give us any hope that he might live. It was a terrible time, and the most terrible part of it was that we were so helpless. We could do nothing to save the poor fellow's life or to alleviate his sufferings.

“ After awhile he began himself to anticipate the worst. He lost all hope of recovery and began planning to arrange his affairs with a view to his death. First of all he made a will. I do not know what its provisions were, but presently he

became apprehensive that it might not be carried out, — that it might be set aside on the ground that he was not in his right mind when he made it. For three or four days he raved and raged about that. Then suddenly one day an idea was born in his brain. Speaking to me he said: ‘If you were my wife, Hazel, even the abrogation of my will couldn’t rob you of everything. You would still have your dower rights. That’s a good thought and a glad one. You must send for a preacher or a magistrate or the mayor or an alderman to marry us at once.’ I half promised that I would do so on the morrow, but he angrily resented the suggestion. ‘To-morrow may be too late,’ he said. ‘This thing must be done now, *now*, NOW!’

“His mother was with us at the time and so was his physician. The physician, in answer to the mother’s question, said that any baffling of his desire might hasten his death, and must certainly render his last hours unhappy. Thereupon the mother, in tears, begged me to consent to his wish, in order that he might at least die happy. She had completely lost hope. She regarded his death

as a thing certain and very near at hand. She urged me, therefore, to consent, saying, 'It will be nothing more than a form, dear, and it will not even change your name, which is the same as his.'

"In wretchedness and despair I consented. We sent for somebody — to this day I don't know whether it was a clergyman or a magistrate or an alderman — and there, by what we supposed was his dying bed, he and I were married."

At this point the narrative was interrupted by the arrival of a carriage full of callers, among them Isabel Bandon, who, upon learning that Kate was to return with Hallie Harvey in time for dinner, decided to accept the invitation that Virginian hospitality always keeps open, and remain for that meal. The fact that her friends declared it impossible for them to stay made no change in her resolution.

"Mr. Rhett is a rider," she said, "and he has an excellent habit of keeping good mounts in his stable. Doubtless he will see me home after supper."

Presently in an aside, Hazel said to Rhett:

"I have all I can bear. Please do not ask me

anything about—you know what—till some other time. Let's be just commonplace and unemotional."

He pressed her hand for answer, and household affairs became thereafter the profoundest subjects of discussion. Then it was that the talk about mushrooms arose.

XIX

KATE'S STRATAGEM

AFTER the mushrooms had been secured and Hazel had prepared them under Rhett's direction and Isabel's criticism, the three, with warm wraps about them, seated themselves in the broad porch to await the coming of Kate with Hallie Harvey. The talk was of books, music, art, and the problems of human life. On these latter Isabel Bandon was equipped with a complete "line" of opinions — professor-made, and thoroughly "tailored to fit" by a female lecturer who knew all that it is possible to know about marriage and divorce and sociological servant girls and all the rest of it. Isabel Bandon had taken her degree as Ph. D. Why then should she not display, for admiration, her remarkable collection of opinions, all of them warranted not to come out in the wash? They were

second-hand opinions, of course. Most people's opinions are so, but she thought them "as good as new," and confidently spread them out for exhibition as her own.

After some other things had been discussed, she recalled — in order to controvert it — Warren Rhett's suggestion that the education needed by the great majority of negroes and "poor whites" at the South was industrial and not scholastic. She reminded him of what he had said on the evening before, and sharply challenged it.

"Yes," he said, "I am convinced that undeveloped people, backward people — and even the majority of people everywhere — are incapable of benefiting by instruction in the routine of the schools beyond the rudiments. Only here and there a negro or a 'poor white' has a brain sufficiently alert to profit by the education of the schools and colleges as they are at present constituted. I would give to every one of such all of scholastic education he cares to receive —"

Hazel, whose soul was in instinctive antagonism to Isabel Bandon, interrupted him to say:

"You did that in Robert's case."

Without replying he went on to say:

"For the great majority of such people the education needed is purely industrial. They should be taught to do things well and skilfully —"

"In order that their 'betters' may profit by their skill, I suppose?" said Miss Bandon.

"I think I hadn't that in mind," he answered. "We all profit by each other's work, whether it be with hand or brain, but there is a great deal more hand work than brain work to be done in the world, and there are more people capable of learning how to do hand work than there are who can do head work. We need more laborers than bosses. We need more skilled workmen in every handicraft than scholars, professors, or learned men of any other sort, and as the great majority are intellectually unfit to become learned men, it seems to me it would be well to organize our systems of education everywhere with reference to those two facts. Our public schools everywhere — yes, and our colleges, too — should provide means for the education of every child in the direction in which he is best fit to do something worth while in the world. The negroes, especially,

are robbed of their rights in not being industrially educated."

"Then you undervalue culture?"

"Not at all. But culture, in the sense in which you employ the term, is simply impossible to the many, and particularly is this true of negroes. Using the word in a broader and truer sense, I think that if a boy has a gift of mechanical construction, or carpentry, or blacksmith's work, there is far more of culture for him in an education that develops that gift than in one which teaches him the classics and intellectual philosophy and psychology. But of course, I am a good deal of a barbarian, probably because I have lived much in out-of-the-way parts of the world, and have had to direct the work of multitudes of men who could never have been taught the rudiments of scholastic education, even if they had been kept in school from infancy to age. I do not wish to press my views upon you for acceptance. Let us talk of other things."

He said this by way of ending a discussion which he saw might assume the aspects of a quarrel between Hazel and the other, if continued too

long. For Hazel had interposed some pertinent words now and then which suggested a mood not placative. But the woman still had the *argumentum ad personam* in reserve, and she fired it as a parting shot :

"How would *you* have liked it, if set to learn the blacksmith's trade?"

"Oh, I liked that very much," he replied; "and I positively enjoyed learning the trade of a machinist."

"But how do you mean? You use past tenses."

"Well, I think the grammar will bear inspection. You see I am a skilled blacksmith and a skilled machinist. I was required to learn both trades thoroughly in connection with a course which I took in mechanical engineering, after I had graduated as a civil engineer. It is a great comfort to me, because, you see, if I ever fail as an engineer and contractor, I can always get good work and good wages in a blacksmith's shop or a machine shop, as I did many times while waiting for a start. There comes Kate."

A moment later he was at the carriage door, assisting Kate and Hallie to descend.

It was perhaps half an hour later that Kate got speech apart with Hazel. She asked eagerly:

"Was it you or Warren who quarrelled with Isabel Bandon? I must know for sure."

"Why do you assume that there was any quarrel?"

"Oh, because she forgot to seek a ray of sunlight to stand in as we approached the porch. Why, her whole head was in shadow, and of course that meant she was agitated."

"Well, you may possess your soul in patience. There was no quarrel — though I don't say there wouldn't have been one between her and me, if Mr. Rhett hadn't prevented it —"

"So you still call him Mr. Rhett, eh? Then you haven't told him the story and come to an understanding? Why, I went away on purpose to give you a chance."

"I have told him part of the story," the girl answered, "but we were interrupted by Miss Bandon's coming, and I have promised to tell him the rest at some other time. But what is the use,

Kate? As I am already married, of course any sort of 'understanding,' as you call it, between him and me, is simply out of the question. I think I had better leave for New York very quietly to-morrow morning."

"How preposterous! Why, there's Warren to be considered, and my hat to be trimmed, and I've two new novels for us to read together, and Warren would be sure to follow you to get the rest of the story, and then I should be quite alone — and you know Charley is coming over a good deal nowadays. By the way, I forgot. He's coming to dinner this afternoon. Do gentlemen really enjoy the sort of dinner you're going to give us — what do you call it? 'A studio affair?' Don't be silly, Hazel!"

And with that Kate, without waiting for an answer, called to another of the company, thus precluding further confidential talk. It was Kate's habit thus to avoid listening when she did not wish to hear what her interlocutor was likely to say.

The little chafing-dish dinner was so great a success in its way that Kate prompted Charley

to exact a promise from Hazel to repeat it a week later. Charley demanded the promise urgently and enthusiastically, and after it was given, Kate said to Charley, in an aside:

“That settles it.”

“Settles what, Kate?”

“Why, now she can’t go away. She always keeps her promises.”

“But was she thinking of —”

“Don’t ask me. Miss Bandon is listening. Hazel, let’s adjourn to the porch. Is it warm enough, Warren?”

“No. The mercury stands well below sixty. I ordered the parlor fire replenished while we were at dinner.”

So the adjournment was made to the spacious oak-wainscoted parlor, where a fire of logs six feet long and “larded,” as it were, with sticks of the fat pine known as “lightwood,” rendered lamps not only unnecessary but an impertinence, although the dusk was coming on and the thick damask curtains were closely drawn. Three or four other guests had come after dinner for the evening, so that the company was numerous

enough to make a considerable semicircle in front of the great, roaring fire, with Hazel and Kate crouching down on the hearth by the chimney jambs, after their favorite fashion.

No sooner was the company comfortably seated than Isabel Bandon brought up again the subject that had been talked of in the afternoon; or rather, she returned to what had been said at the end of that talk.

"You told us this afternoon, Mr. Rhett, that you had learned the blacksmith's and the machinist's trades. That, of course, was only incidental to professional study?"

"Incidental? Yes, in a way. But apart from that I think it well for every man who can, to learn a trade, to acquire some definite skill by which he may earn a living if need be."

"What I was thinking was that of course your learning of those trades was purely perfunctory, and therefore superficial."

"Why, how can that be?" asked Kate. "I don't know anything about it, but I know Warren never does anything in the way you suggest. If he told me he had studied millinery I'd shut my

eyes and let him trim the most costly hat I ever expected to own." Here Kate went off at a tangent, after her habit. "By the way, Warren, won't you write for some oysters? They're in season now and you'd better order Back Rivers, or is it York Rivers that we all like, —or may be it's Lynn Havens or Cherry Stones. I declare I forget, but you'll know when you come to write for them."

"I have already anticipated your need, Kate, and have ordered a barrel to be shipped twice a week."

Isabel Bandon regarded this interruption as an impertinence, but she did not say so. She returned to her thesis instead.

"What I meant to suggest, Mr. Rhett, was that in a great engineering school of course a student would not be expected to work at the anvil, but would learn by observation while hired blacksmiths did the hard, dirty work. Is it not so?"

"Not in any reputable engineering school I ever heard of," he answered. "Certainly not in mine."

"You mean that you actually did the work yourself?"

"Yes — every sort of work known to the trade, and we had to do every part and detail of it over and over again, until we could do it as well as the master blacksmiths themselves. Before any one of us could get his diploma, he must present a certificate showing that he was a competent master blacksmith, a competent steam-fitter, and a competent machinist."

"Oh, of course, in the way of professional study, I suppose such things are required."

"Not only required, but requisite. No man can hope to succeed as a mechanical engineer who does not know those trades — just as no man can become a civil engineer without skill in mechanical drawing. Besides, it is a good thing in itself for a man to have a trade to fall back upon. As I told you before, I found it exceedingly handy, while I was waiting for practice in my profession, to earn my bread and butter by working as a journeyman in a blacksmith's shop."

"Did you work for wages?"

"Yes, certainly. Why else should I have worked?"

The woman paused. Perhaps she was care-

fully framing her next question. However that may be, Hazel anticipated her.

“Why should not any man of brains and character be proud of being a blacksmith?” she asked. “There was Elihu Burritt, the learned blacksmith and distinguished writer, who gained his wonderful knowledge of languages and literature, with his forge, his anvil, and his sledge for companions. Better still, there is the Rev. Dr. Robert Collyer — whose character is everywhere an influence for good, whose eloquence has persuaded many thousands to right living, and whose very presence is a benediction. He was a blacksmith, first in England and later in this country. It seems to me we ought to regard blacksmithing as one of the learned professions, and the blacksmith’s shop as an educational institution which turns out some wonderful graduates.”

Rhett was glad when Hazel finished her sentence, and by way of preventing further discussion upon what he felt to be dangerous lines, now that Hazel had joined in it, he quickly asked:

“Kate, may we not have some music?”

XX

HAZEL'S INTERFERENCE

WHEN the other guests had gone and the time came for Isabel Bandon to set out for home under Rhett's escort, that gentleman directed a dining-room boy to order the horses, naming Dolly Varden for himself and the palfrey for his guest. Kate, with a look of absolutely childish innocence in her face, which covered the deepest guile, asked :

" Why not order three horses, and let Hazel go too? It would be lonely for you, Warren, coming home by yourself."

The look that flashed for the tenth of a second in Isabel Bandon's face and then disappeared before a ripple of smiles was quite inscrutable to Warren and Hazel. But Kate, who was serenely and justly confident of her judgments in cases that involved the motives of women, had no hes-

itation in interpreting it in her own mind as meaning jealousy and vexation of spirit. So sure was she of her interpretation that she had anticipated some such manifestation and was looking for it in Isabel's face and manner while making her suggestion. It is said that the test of science is its ability to predict, and in such cases as this Kate's predictions very rarely failed. Her shrewd womanly instinct stood the test as science.

After that little flash, Isabel Bandon greeted the suggestion with seeming enthusiasm, but proceeded at once to enlarge it, saying:

"But why shouldn't we all go? Surely you and Mr. Danforth will enjoy a night ride better than a lonely vigil here at Mannamac?"

Again Kate's insight into the woman's motive was fully self-confident, and she declined the invitation in her inconsequent way, saying:

"Oh, no, I can't go. You see my maid, Diana, never knows what to do when I am away of an evening, and besides she has gone to a party to be gone overnight, and still again, I'm seriously afraid there'll be a frost to-night to nip our delicious late peas. So of course I *can't* go."

Warren Rhett and Charley Danforth looked at each other with a little, low chuckle which implied understanding and, perhaps, admiration for Kate's adroit innocence. So only three horses were ordered.

The distance between Mannamac and Bandonnais was about four miles. As the evening was cool and the horses fresh the party of three covered it, mainly at an easy gallop, within about half an hour. Either the road was longer, as Warren Rhett and Hazel Cameron returned, or the horses were less energetic, or for some other reason, the time consumed in the return ride was a full hour. Something had happened just as the party was leaving Mannamac, which became the subject of a very earnest conversation between Hazel and Rhett on the return journey. The happening was this:

As the party passed the stables, old Joe, the most faithful of the negroes on the plantation, and the one of highest character, stopped the cavalcade to speak with the master of the plantation.

"We got the ploughin' done," he reported, "but so many of the folks had lef' in the

mawnin' 'thout helpin' with the ploughin' at all, we had to work clean tell dark to finish it."

"Yes, I know," answered Rhett. "The folks held a meeting last night and decided to go on strike."

"What's that, Mas' Warren?"

"Why, they decided that they wouldn't obey orders, that they wouldn't accept my permission to go to the camp-meeting after the ploughing was done, but would go in the morning, leaving the ploughing to take care of itself."

"How did you know that, Mas' Warren?"

"Oh, I take pains to know what I want to know. You and some others, faithful to your obligations, stayed to do the ploughing. Now I want you to come to me in the morning and tell me, not the names of those who went on strike — because they'd call you a telltale if you did that — but the name of every one who guided a plough to-day. There's an extra dollar of pay for each of you, and as the new Yankee holiday, Thanksgiving, is proclaimed in Virginia for next Thursday, I intend to give a turkey for that celebration to each of the men who ploughed. There's a lot of

clapboards under the shed of the prize barn, and a keg of nails in the corn-house. I want you tomorrow to take them and board up the doors and windows of every quarter whose occupant has gone to the camp-meeting on strike. Put all their things outside first. You understand they are not to live on this plantation hereafter."

"But, Mas' Warren, where is they to live?"

"I don't know. They must look to that themselves. They had fair warning and fair terms. They have chosen to quit the plantation. They must stay quit. Good night, Joe. Do as I tell you and come to me for the turkeys and the extra pay for you who were faithful."

With that he ended the conversation and set the cavalcade in motion again.

He and Hazel had scarcely cleared the house grounds of Bandonnais on their return journey, when Hazel brought up this subject for discussion. The horses had galloped for a few hundred yards, when by mutual consent the young woman and the young man reined them down to a walk. At a gallop there can be no conversation except in ejaculations; at the trot there can be none that

is not jolty; but at a walk, riders may calmly discuss the profoundest problems of the universe.

Soon after the walking gait was established, Hazel entered her plea for mercy.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," she said.

"You wish I wouldn't do what, Hazel?" he asked.

"Why, what you said to old Joe, as we passed the stables."

"But why not? It is simple justice. Those people have engaged to cultivate Kate's plantation for her in return for a certain wage, and certain rations, together with rent free quarters and garden grounds of their own. They knew as well as I did how necessary it was to get this ploughing done, in order that a winter wheat crop may be sowed while the fit weather lasts; moreover, I gave them special orders on the subject, and I have a right to give orders which, under their contracts they are bound to obey. They know perfectly well that under their contracts they have no right to quit their work without permission; yet after I had given them permission to absent themselves for two days on condition that they should first do

this half-day's ploughing, or less, they conspired to reject my terms, defy me, neglect a necessary and by no means onerous duty, and go off in the early morning. They had fair warning that if they did that they could not return to the plantation. It seems to me that I have no choice but to enforce the terms I have prescribed."

The girl did not immediately reply to this. She was thinking how best to set forth the thought that was in her mind. Presently Rhett resumed:

"I heartily wish every negro farm-hand on the plantation had joined in the strike."

"Why?" she asked.

"Why, you see if I could completely rid the place of them, my problem would be easy. The leases of little places to the renters will expire on the first of January. I do not intend to renew them, because the negroes who hold them practically pay no rent at all. They cultivate no selling crops and so, in effect, Kate gets next to nothing at all from their use of her land and her quarters. I have investigated, and I find that she has paid out for repairs on their houses nearly a hundred dollars more than the total amount of

rent paid by them. That system must cease at the end of the year. Now, if at the same time I could rid the plantation of the hired negro farmhands, I should be free to inaugurate a new system — one that would render Kate financially independent."

"Tell me about that, please."

"Why, I should telegraph to my partners to hire a competent Italian gardener, and send him to me with a sufficient corps of assistants hired and controlled by himself, — under the *padrone* system, you know, — and I should then convert the arable part of the plantation into a vast and skilfully cultivated truck farm, worked for all it is worth. For the *padrone* always sees to it that the men he hires do their work. But the fact that five or six families of the field negroes remain faithful bothers me. You see I can't combine the two systems of labor, and of course I cannot cast these faithful ones adrift. I think I shall solve the problem in a heroic way by giving to each of the faithful ones a little farm, rent free, and converting the rest of the land into a great truck farm cultivated by Italians under a *padrone* who knows

his business. That will pay Kate better than any other disposition of the matter that I can think of."

"You do not consider your own interest in the plantation, then?"

"Practically I have no interest. Kate is younger than I am, and she is an exceedingly healthy and well-ordered woman. She will outlive me almost to a certainty. At any rate I hope she will. She has a life estate. My interest is only a reversionary one after her death. That need not concern me, as I shall probably not live to come into the property. As to my heirs, at present they are only some distant cousins whom I never saw and for whom I do not care a wag of Dolly Varden's ears. Besides I am abundantly able to take care of myself, without waiting for a dead woman's shoes. So as soon as I succeed in putting this plantation upon a securely paying basis, I intend to relinquish to Kate all my reversionary interest in it, making her its absolute owner."

"What if Kate should marry?" asked Hazel, with a peculiarly significant note in her voice.

"Oh, how I wish she would!" he replied.

"That would relieve me of much perplexity. In that case I could turn the whole problem over to her husband. As matters now stand I feel that it is my imperative duty to look out for her interests, for which she is utterly incapable of looking out herself."

They rode on in silence for a little while. Presently Hazel said:

"I think you are in some ways a very generous man."

"Finish your sentence, please," he answered. "What about the other ways?"

"Why, I think that in some other ways your experiences and the conditions of your work have made you much harder, more exigent — even more despotic than you would naturally be."

"I wish you would explain that," he said. "Believe me, Hazel, it is my dominant purpose to be always just, always right, and always kindly in my dealings with my fellow men."

"I know that perfectly. That is why I so dislike to see you warped by your experiences to the doing of injustice and cruelty."

The girl spoke with a sincerity and an intensity

of feeling that must have commanded respect from the most arrogantly self-conceited of men, and Warren Rhett was very far indeed from being such a man. Indeed his success in life had in large measure come from his teachableness.

"Go on," he said. "Tell me all that is in your mind. My own is receptive, I assure you."

"I know that. Otherwise I should not have ventured to speak at all. You have been accustomed to deal with a class of men very different from these poor negroes, in their mental condition, in their ways of thinking and in their attitude toward life. They were men controlled absolutely by self-interest, men utterly destitute of any sense of abstract right and wrong, men accustomed — in self-interest — to accommodate themselves to circumstance. These poor plantation negroes are not such as they. They have all their lives, and for generations past, been taught to think of themselves as entitled to a living from the plantation on which they were born. No sense of reciprocal obligation has ever been awakened in their minds. Having been emancipated from slavery, they are very naturally jealous of their

new-found freedom. They are ignorant. Their minds are not sufficiently instructed, or even sufficiently awake, to comprehend the mutuality of obligation, and especially they cannot understand the compatibility of freedom with obligations of obedience."

"That is precisely what I am trying to teach them," said Rhett.

"Yes, I understand that," answered Hazel with a suggestion in her voice of the admiration she felt for this great, strong man. "But you make a mistake, I think. You are trying to do in detail what must be done more largely if it is to be profitably done at all."

"Just how do you mean?"

"Why, I mean this: I quite agree with you that the negroes will never advance much in the scale of civilization — the masses of them, at least — until, in the expressive slang you used, they are put 'up against it,' in other words, subjected to that struggle for existence which is always and everywhere the inspiration, the instigation of progress. But what good of that kind can come from the proceedings you purpose to

take in this case? If all the negroes in the South, or even a considerable proportion of them, could be put 'up against it,' we might hope for very beneficent results. But no such results can flow from your endeavor to put the negroes of Mannamac plantation 'up against it.' You merely make martyrs of them. You really teach them no lesson. If you close their houses to them they will camp out-of-doors for awhile, supplying themselves with food by predatory methods, and little by little they will find places in which to live on other plantations. And their last state will certainly be no better than their first."

"I see a certain measure of justice in what you say," said Warren, "but there are other considerations. It is my duty so to organize things on Kate's plantation that the land shall pay her a living instead of being merely a refuge for predatory idlers and paupers. These people are under a contract of work, and they will not work. I purpose to rid the plantation of them and to put into their places a lot of men who will work, because they will have a contract master of their own kind who knows how to make them work."

"But there is the human consideration," she suggested.

"True!" he said. "But I have no right, now that I have taken hold of Kate's affairs, to convert her plantation into an eleemosynary institution. It is my duty so to organize it as to make it yield to her the return it ought to yield. And I am satisfied that to compel that will be the best possible thing for the negroes themselves. I have seen much of the negroes who have gone North and subjected themselves to the struggle for existence. They are handicapped in many ways — particularly those of them who know how to do something. I remember one night in an elevated railroad train hearing a number of rather intelligent negroes discuss that subject. One of them spoke bitterly of the South and of Southern conditions, whereupon another — a man of some education and more brains — delivered his opinion. 'I tell you,' he said, 'that the negro has a better chance, and more liberty, at the South than at the North. I am a puddler by trade. I know my trade as well as any other man knows it. I have worked at it at Anniston, Hot Blast, and Birmingham, and

never a man interfered with me. Seeing that puddlers' wages were higher at Pittsburg than in the South, I went there. There I found that my color completely excluded me. Nobody was allowed to work there without being a member of the Union, and I was not allowed to become a member of the Union, because I am a negro. I tell you the South offers to the negro a far freer chance than the North does. The only trouble is that the majority of the negroes down there are too lazy to take advantage of their opportunities.' There was an expert opinion from one who had suffered wrong. But the plantation negroes seem incapable of seizing their opportunities. With a favorable climate, a fruitful soil, and an indulgent public sentiment, they ought to enrich themselves rapidly by work. But they won't work, and they remain poor."

The girl waited awhile before answering. Finally she said :

"Did it ever occur to you to compare them with the peasants of Continental Europe?"

"No. I had not thought of that. But of course there is room for the comparison."

“ Yes, and I think such a comparison may be instructive. The negro farm-hand is a residuum. The more intelligent negroes have found employment in other ways, and they are prospering. The negroes who continue as farm-hands are essentially peasants. They are equally hopeless of betterment, equally incapable of pushing their fortunes to a higher level, equally ignorant, and equally content to remain ignorant. But there are differences. The negro’s standard of living is lower in some respects and higher in others than that of the peasant. He wants food in abundance, and especially meat food, and under the conditions that prevail here, he is able to get it. The European peasant who gets meat once a week reckons himself peculiarly fortunate. Many of them, particularly in Italy, do not taste meat oftener than once a year. On the other hand, the European peasant is thrifty. He looks forward. He is alert to seize upon every advantage, every opportunity that may present itself. The negro, accustomed through long generations to ease of living, through dependence upon others, knows nothing of thrift, but trusts to-morrow to take care of itself.”

"Your analysis seems to me sound," answered Rhett, "but what lesson do you draw from it?"

"Why, this, that in dealing with the Southern negro peasant, you should take account of his moral and intellectual condition as well as of his physical status, and of the obligation he owes under his contracts of work. I have seen a good deal upon several plantations, and it seems to me chiefly the fault of the planters themselves that the negroes do not work in a way to make their work profitable."

"Tell me of that."

"Why, on very few plantations that I have visited is there any real, vigilant superintendence. The planters do not stay in the fields with their hands. Many of them scarcely visit their fields at all. It is their own habit of mind to let things take care of themselves, just as it is the habit of mind of the negroes to leave matters at loose ends. Every successful business at the North is under the constant surveillance of its owner, or of some one acting in his stead and responsible to him. Otherwise the business would speedily end in failure. Is it not so?"

"Of course it is. But go on."

"Well, I think that if the planters would superintend their own affairs in the same diligent way, instead of taking their ease, the plantations would be much more profitable. But especially I think such constant supervision would educate the negroes to diligence and faithfulness in work, and that would be a valuable lesson for them to learn. Under the present practice every inducement is offered to them to idle, to shirk, and to waste substance in a score of ways. I think the greatest possible benefaction to the negroes, and the best educational influence that could be brought to bear upon them would be their subjection to the constant presence and supervision of the man who employs them, or of some one acting in his stead."

They had reached Mannamac by this time, and dismounted.

"Pardon me," said Hazel. "It is altogether probable that I have been talking too confidently about matters that I don't understand, but I have a very strong feeling that for you to carry out the orders you gave to old Joe to-night, thus matching your intelligence and your authority against the

ignorance and helplessness of those poor creatures, would be a thing unworthy of such a man. Good night !”

And she fairly ran into the house and up the stairs.

Rhett turned to the negro boy who was about to lead the horses to the stables and said :

“ Tell Uncle Joe to come to the Great House and see me in the morning before he does what I ordered him to do.”

XXI

WARREN RHETT'S SURRENDER

WARREN RHETT was sorely perplexed. He still had Hazel's unfinished story to wrestle with in his mind, wondering what the rest of it might be. He had hoped that she would finish the narrative during that night ride, but she had carefully avoided it, plunging instead into the subject of his dealings with the negroes.

There, too, was a puzzle. He had fully wrought out in his own mind a course of procedure which he firmly believed to be altogether right and wise — best for Kate, best even for the negroes themselves. But this extraordinary girl — who pretended to no definite knowledge, and who, when ordinary subjects were up for discussion, was accustomed to sit as a silent listener, shielding herself behind the mask of inexperience — this

extraordinary girl had offered considerations so profound as to shake even his determination. He would have liked to argue the question out with her, but she had run away, woman-like, giving him no opportunity.

He walked the porch for half of what remained of the night, trying by the cudgelling of his brains to find a way out — a way that should satisfy his own convictions of justice, policy, and the ultimate advantage of the negroes themselves, and that at the same time should not wound or offend the sentiments and sympathies of Hazel Cameron. How he longed to have her with him, in order that he might discuss the matter further with her, that he might have the benefit of her suggestions as to the various plans that formulated themselves in his mind — and still more that he might have the joy of her presence. But she had run away, leaving him alone, and leaving him to guess the greater part of what was in her mind, — and probably to guess wrong.

Strong man that he was, he was not opinionated beyond the common. He recognized the justice of much that Hazel had said in behalf of the

errant negroes, but it did not seem to him sufficient to justify him in abandoning his original purpose.

But as he weighed the matter in his mind there was another and a ponderous weight always in the scale. In spite of himself, in spite of circumstances that seemed to forbid, Warren Rhett loved Hazel Cameron with all the passionate intensity of a strong, virile nature — and, as he had said in his song, “Love is the sum of it all.” That strange marriage of hers, whatever its outcome might have been, might be a bar to his marriage with her, either now or hereafter; but in his soul he was determined that it should offer no bar whatever to his loving her, and he loved her with the utmost intensity of passion of which he was capable.

“After all,” he reflected, when he had thrashed the matter out in his mind, “after all, the thing I am most concerned about is to satisfy Hazel’s scruples. Fortunately I can do that without quite relinquishing my authority or abandoning my purpose.”

He had determined upon a compromise — the

most dangerous of all things in a case involving principle and conscience. When Joe came to him in the very early morning, he said to him :

“ Joe, I have decided not to be too hard on the folks. You needn’t board up their houses, or set their things out-of-doors. They’ll be back on the plantation this afternoon — ”

“ They’s a comin’ this mornin’, sir,” answered Joe, “ and most of ’em is heah already.”

“ How did that come about ? ”

“ Why, when I called the folks together what stayed on the plantation, an’ tole ’em we was to board up all the houses an’ they must be ready to help, some of ’em went over to the camp-meetin’ an’ give the alarm, tellin’ every one of the folks there that they’d better mosey home, an’ they’re a moseyin’.”

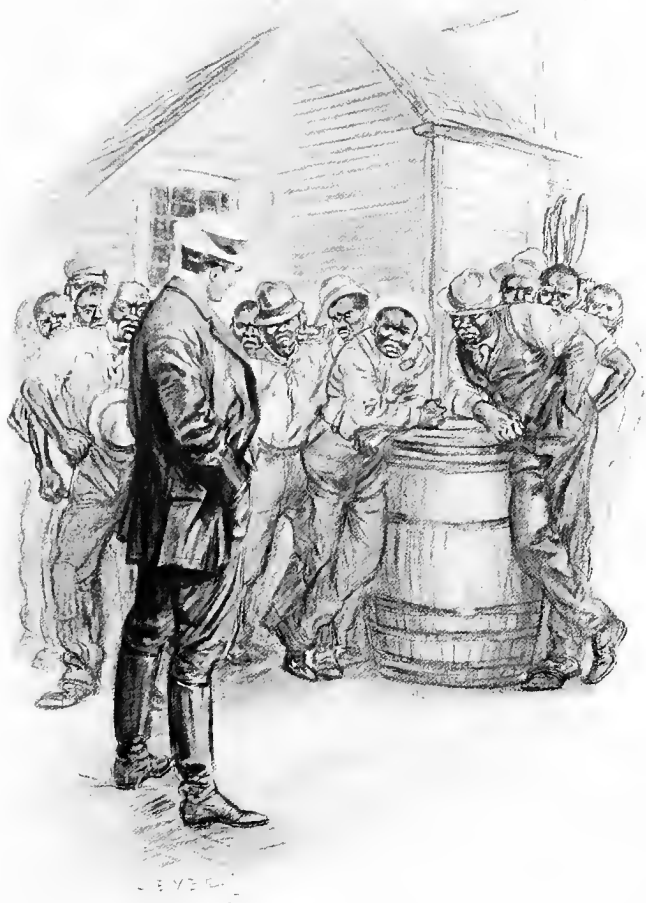
“ So much the better,” said Rhett. “ I’ll be at the stables when the sun rises, half an hour hence, and I’ll tell them what I am going to do about this thing. Have them all there, Joe.”

When the negroes assembled at the stables they were in sulky and sullen mood. This man,

Warren Rhett, had abridged their liberty, denied to them their freedom, invaded their rights — or so they held. He had compelled them to relinquish the intoxicating delights of highly emotional religion as offered to them at camp-meeting. He had asserted his right to compel them to fulfil their contract obligations, and he had suggested a plan by which he could do that successfully. To their dull minds this seemed a restoration of slavery; for if a man cannot do precisely as he pleases, they argued, he is a slave.

Rhett quickly interpreted their thought and their mood in the light of such mutterings as he heard. His own mood was not an over-patient one. He was vexed that he had, for Hazel's sake, relinquished a purpose which he still believed to have been right and wise. He made short work of his talk with the negroes.

"You men are under contract to work this plantation," he said. "You haven't done it faithfully, as you perfectly well know. Yet you have had your rations and your wages. Your neglect has been dishonest in you and disastrous to Mrs. Rhett's interests. This year the planta-



HE MADE SHORT WORK OF HIS TALK WITH THE NEGROES.

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tion hasn't paid expenses, simply because you who are paid to cultivate it have shirked and idled. Late as it was in the year when I came down here, it was still possible to pull the plantation through the year without loss, if you men would work, but you wouldn't. You went off to the circus when your work here was far behind. Then you made up your minds to go to the camp-meeting, although every one of you knew how important it was to finish the ploughing first, so that a crop of winter wheat might be sowed. Not one of you could be spared for an hour, but I didn't want to be too hard on you, so I gave you leave to go away for two days, provided you should finish the ploughing first. With all of you at work it could have been finished in half a day. But you wouldn't work. You wouldn't wait. You held a meeting and the majority of you decided to defy my authority, abandon the ploughing, and go off to the camp-meeting early in the morning. When I heard of that I decided that none of those who deserted in that way should ever come back. I ordered your houses boarded up and your things set out-of-doors. I still think that would have

been my right course, but I have been persuaded to be more merciful. I have let you come back to finish out the year for which you were hired. A little more than a month of it remains. But I want to tell you now that I shall hire none of you for next year. I am going to hire white laborers from the north. Those of you who have remained at your work instead of going away to camp-meeting, shall remain here, but not as hired plantation hands. I am going to give to Joe and to each of the other faithful ones, a house and a field, rent free. The rest of you must look out for employment elsewhere next year. I give you more than a month's notice, and if any of you want to take a day off to hunt for another place, he has only to ask me and he shall have all the time he needs. That's all I have to say to you. You may go to your work now."

With that he turned upon his heel and returned to the house. Hazel was standing in the porch and he had just time for a few words with her before Danforth, who had passed the night at Mannamac, joined them.

"I have surrendered," he said, "not to the

negroes, but to your pleadings. I still think my original purpose was both right and wise, but —”

“Then you should have adhered to it,” she interjected.

“But you begged me not to do so, and for your sake I have modified it.”

“I think that was wrong,” she said. “You are a strong man, experienced, able and accustomed to deal with men. I am only a woman, utterly without such experience, and as a woman I suppose my sympathies are apt sometimes to get the better of such judgment as I have. It was right enough for you to listen to what I said, to weigh it, and to give it such force as in your better judgment it deserved; but you should not have acted upon it further than it convinced your own mind. But tell me what you have done.”

He hurriedly outlined it. She said:

“That seems to me just and fair. You are in duty bound to arrange things here wisely. You are certainly under no obligation to hire people you don’t want to hire, particularly when your reason for not wanting them is their unfaithfulness. But what about those who rent lands?”

"I have notified all of them that I shall not renew their leases for another year. They pay practically no rent, and I can make the land profitable in other ways."

"There again you are right," she said. "Thank you for considering me in the matter, and for tempering justice with mercy."

Here Danforth joined them and there was no opportunity for further talk of an intimate character.

XXII

THE REST OF HAZEL'S STORY

AT breakfast Kate was disturbed by the absence of a roe herring for Warren, a dainty of which he was very fond. As if the matter had been one of public consequence, like a bank defalcation or a railroad disaster, she sent Henry to investigate, to find out who was at fault, and if possible to repair the omission.

"I'm perfectly certain I ordered your herring served, Warren, because I was kneading the bread when I did it, and I find, by the way, that we're running low in our coffee supply, so I am going to write to Richmond to-day for another bag, unless you will do it for me, Warren — won't you, dear? You see I sha'n't have any too much time."

"Why, what have you on the tapis, Kate?" he asked. "Of course I'll order the coffee, but what is it that so presses you for time?"

“Why, you know the best train—the one that has a drawing-room car on it—leaves the Court-House at eleven o’clock.”

“Yes, I know; but pardon my peculiar imbecility if I fail quite to understand the relation between that undoubted fact, and your allotment of time for the writing of any letters of a business or social character that you may wish to write.”

“Now you’re laughing at me,” said Kate, cheerily; “I always know that when you use pompous sentences. But I don’t mind. By the way, I wonder if any of you heard the parrot this morning. You know I call him ‘pompous’ because he struts so, though he is moulting badly just now. He was shut up in the back entry, where he sleeps, and Harriet was late in cleaning his cage and hanging him out in the porch, so a little after sunrise he raised a racket, calling for Harriet, and denouncing her as ‘a naughty girl.’ He is almost human in his intelligence.”

“He is more than human,” said Warren; “he is positively demoniacal. But you, Kate, have switched off your theme. You’ve forgotten to

answer my question — or did you purposely omit to do so?"

"What question?"

"Why, I asked what bearing the time-table of the arrivals and departures of trains had upon the question of your leisure to write letters?"

"Oh, you mean about the coffee? Well, of course I don't want to go down to Shockhoe slip just to tell the commission merchant to send me a bag of coffee. You see, Hazel, they unload all sorts of things there, even onions and garlic and guano and stale cabbages. So of course I'd rather have Warren write for the coffee."

By this time Warren, who was used to Kate's intellectual and conversational methods, began to have some glimmering notion of her meaning.

"Are you thinking of going to Richmond by the eleven o'clock train, Kate?" he asked.

"Why, yes, of course. Didn't I tell you that? It's what I have been trying to tell you all the time. But you interrupt one so."

"Will you take Hazel with you?"

"No, certainly not. You'd forget that there ever was such a thing as dinner at Mannamac if

there weren't some woman here to remind you. Hazel is going to stay and keep house while I run down to Richmond — or is it up? I declare I always forget. Anyhow, Charley is going to escort me."

"Oh, that's the arrangement, is it? And when shall I send the carriage to meet you at the Court-House on your return, Kate?"

"Well, I'm going to stay overnight with Cousin Mildred, you know. Don't you think she's charming, Hazel? But of course you do, and really I haven't time to wait for you to tell Warren what a dear she is. She can tell you that after I'm gone, Warren, and anything else she pleases. But please, Warren, don't forget to order the bag of coffee. It is Java and Mocha, you know — or else it's Mocha and Java. You can look on the last bag and see. I haven't time to attend to details. I must run and dress."

"But Kate — " he began. But Kate was already above stairs.

"Never mind," said Hazel, "I'll find out before she goes when she wants the carriage to meet her."

It is here to be observed that so far as anybody concerned was ever able to discover, Kate Rhett's visit to Richmond on that day had no other instigation than her desire that Warren Rhett and Hazel Cameron should be left alone together at Mannamac, to "talk the thing out." It is in evidence that need not be presented here that Kate neither shopped, except to buy some ribbon and the like, nor visited a dressmaker or a milliner during her stay in the capital city. So far as can be learned, her sole purchase there, apart from some ribbon for Hallie, was a glass of ice-cream soda. But Kate was a peculiar person, and not the least admirable of her peculiarities was her ingenious activity in making opportunities for those to whose love-making she wished well.

When she and Danforth had gone, Hazel set about her housekeeping duties, and young Rhett addressed himself to the task of writing letters. First of all, in loyalty to Kate, he wrote for the needed bag of coffee. Then he wrote to one of his partners in New York, asking him to engage a thoroughly competent Italian gardener and truck

farmer, and a competent assistant, to take charge of the cultivation of Mannamac plantation during the coming year, beginning with the first of January. With that precision which always distinguishes the work of an educated engineer, he made an exact statement of the number of acres of arable land, the average amount of fertilizer yielded by the stables and poultry yards, the character and needs of the various soils, and everything else that might have a bearing upon the matter. Then he added :

“I want you to make a hard and fast contract with the padrone, and to exact a bond security for its fulfilment. He must judge for himself how many men he needs, but he must make himself responsible under bonds for the cultivation of the plantation in the most efficient way possible. It is results that I want. It is for him to manage processes. The plantation is fertile, and the water road to the markets of New York and other Northern cities is very easy and very cheap. The plantation can afford to pay a good price to the right man.”

Finding upon inquiry that Hazel had no letters

to send, he despatched these two by a young negro, to the Court-House.

After a little while Hazel finished the household duties of the morning, and joined him in the parlor, where a cheerful fire was blazing. He greeted her coming with a welcome, and said to her :

“ Perhaps you will now finish the life story you started to tell me the other day.”

“ I think that is why Kate went to Richmond,” she replied, “ and I shall be glad to have the distressing thing over with.”

She seated herself, not in any one of the great easy chairs, but upon a stiff, straight-backed, carved contrivance of the kind then known in Virginia as “ Elizabethan,” and she sat bolt upright, disdaining even the uncomfortable support that its rigid and knob-studded back might have afforded. Evidently she was nerving herself for a task that seemed to her exceedingly hard. Presently she began in a low, suppressed, nervously agitated voice :

“ When I went through that bedside marriage ceremony, in the hospital, it was the opinion of all

the doctors that Edward Cameron could not live three days — probably not one day. I went through the ceremony reluctantly, in order that he might not be vexed with opposition on his dying bed, but might die satisfied. I had absolutely no other thought in the matter, and that thought was earnestly pressed upon me by his mother who was well-nigh distracted by his sufferings.

“ But he did not die. After the meaningless ceremony was over he became quiet and sank to sleep. Little by little he grew better of his physical hurts, and after awhile it became evident that he was going to recover.

“ But there was a taint in his blood of which I had not heard before. His father, his father’s sister, and his father’s brother had all died in insane asylums, and when Edward Cameron recovered from his physical maladies he was a raving maniac.”

Here Hazel ceased to speak for a time, as if her emotions had been too much for her. When she had recovered her self-control she went on:

“ I was not really in love with him, — as I now

understand such things, — but I had liked him mightily. I admired his heroism in rescuing us women, and I very tenderly pitied his sufferings. All that was the cruellest part of it, for in his mania he conceived an intense hatred and distrust of his gentle mother and of me. After an effort on our part to soothe and placate him — an effort which resulted only in exciting his maniacal antagonism to a homicidal impulse — the physicians forbade either of us to see him again. His sister got herself appointed the guardian of his person and estate, and she did the only thing that could be done for him. That is to say, she placed him in a private insane asylum, where she personally fitted up rooms for him, so that he might be comfortable. At my suggestion, she employed two male attendants, so that he might walk abroad or go driving in their company without danger to any one, and thus might not feel that he was under restraint of any kind.

“ His dear old mother was in feeble health even before all this happened. The shock, and the strain, and the horror of it all — and especially her son's insane antipathy to herself, proved too

much for her. She took to her bed, and insisted that I should be always with her. She called me 'daughter,' and seemed to cling to me and to look to me for the sympathy and tenderness which her own daughter gave her in exceedingly scant measure, if at all.

"After a little while the dear old lady seemed to give up trying to live, and one night she sank into the final sleep."

Here again the girl suspended her narrative and quitted the room for a time. On her return she resumed her narrative in a strong and not tremulous voice, as if some impulse of self-defence against remembered wrong had nerved her to this part of her task.

"I loved that gentle old lady as I might have loved my own mother if I had ever known her. My grief — I need not tell you of that. Then came a blow in the face — a cruel, merciless, brutal blow. The daughter — Edward Cameron's sister Beatrice — came to me while her mother lay awaiting the ministry of loving hands in preparation for the grave, and in a cold, hard voice said :

“ ‘ Miss Cameron, now that my mother is dead, so that you can expect no more favors from her, perhaps you will have the goodness to quit the house and leave us alone with our sorrow.’

“ You can imagine what I felt — I who had never thought of benefit of any kind from that old lady, except the blessing of her affection. Only my pride saved me from a nervous breakdown. That pride came to my rescue as resolutely as Edward Cameron had done on the occasion of the fire. I said in answer, that I had loved her mother very tenderly, and that I had intended to attend her funeral, and then go about my own affairs, which sorely needed my attention, since all my belongings, including even my clothing and my toilet appliances, had been destroyed in the fire; but that as my presence at the funeral would be unwelcome to the daughter, I would leave at once — and would she have one of the servants call a cab for me.

“ Then I went to the room that had been mine in the house, and carefully laid out everything that Edward Cameron's mother had provided for me, even to some little velvet hair-ribbons. All

those things I left upon the dressing-case, in order that I might not be accused of having profited by so much as a cent's worth from my ministry.

“ I had no clothes except those in which I had been rescued from the fire. I had no money with which to pay the cabman who was to drive me back to the denser part of the city, but I thought I knew how to arrange that, and at any rate I was proudly determined to leave that house with my head erect. If worse came to worst I had my watch with which to satisfy the cabman, and I had studio friends with whom I could live for a few days if necessary — for it is not the rich or the well-to-do who are readiest to come to one's assistance in time of sore need, but those who know what sore need is by virtue of frequent experience of it. But I did not intend to appeal to any of these for anything more than a night's lodging if I could help it, and I thought I knew how to help it.

“ There was a small picture-dealer to whom and through whom I had sold many pot-boilers, and I directed the cabman to drive to his little shop in upper Seventh Avenue. There I bade the Jehu

wait for me. I told the dealer how I had been burned out, and, without telling him how utterly destitute I was of clothes and everything else, I frankly said to him that I was in present and pressing need of a little money. I mentioned twenty or twenty-five dollars, and I told him if he would let me have that sum as an advance upon work to be done, I would do absolutely nothing else than paint pot-boilers for him until the debt was discharged. He was a Russian Jew, born in St. Petersburg — a man alert, business-like and, as it proved, generous.

“He had a comely wife and a beautiful little boy, to whom I had taken a fancy, and for whom a little while before I had painted a number of comic picture-cards as a present. The man said to me at once, ‘You shall have the money in advance of course,’ and with that he opened a wallet; ‘but I happen to know you have lost everything, and twenty or twenty-five dollars will not be enough to set you up again. I am going to count out ten ten-dollar bills for you, and then I’m going to ask a favor. I have a customer, a lady — a very fine lady and a very good customer. She has

seen you here several times, and she has asked me to get from you a portrait of yourself — idealized if you please, so as to make a picture of it and not a slavish portrait, but still preserving your features and your expression, and, above all, your complexion and coloring. I want you to paint that picture for me, about half life size. It will satisfy your debt to me, and I shall make a handsome profit on the frame. You know that is where I make most of my profits. Still in this case' — and he shrugged his shoulders — 'there will be fifty dollars' profit on the picture itself, for the lady is rich and liberal, and I'll divide that with you.'

" 'You shall do nothing of the kind,' I answered. 'If I paint the picture at all, the profit on its sale shall be entirely your own. But I do not see how I can paint it at all.'

" 'But why not?' he asked.

" I answered: 'A woman possessed of any modesty can't paint and sell her own portrait.'

" 'But that is not what I ask. You remember seeing a little Irish girl in here several times — a girl with frowzy red hair, and freckles all over her face?'

“ I remembered the girl, and told him so.

“ ‘ Well, look at this, and this, and this,’ he said, showing me some really beautiful pictures. ‘ If you remember her well, you’ll see that all three of these pictures were painted from her as a model. They are not portraits, yet knowing her, you can find her in each of them. That is what I want you to do. Set a mirror in front of yourself, study your own countenance and expression and complexion; bring all you have of imagination to bear, and paint me not a portrait but a picture.’

“ After a little thought, and a glance into the mirror which he swung around for that purpose, I saw how easily I might do this thing, and I was almost persuaded. He completed the persuasion by saying: ‘ I am very anxious about this, because the lady is a very good customer. I buy pictures for her in the big shops, and she pays me liberal commissions. She is so anxious for this picture from your own hand that she has threatened to withdraw her patronage if I do not get it for her. My dear young lady, let me tell you: I would rather never get back a penny of the money I am advancing to you — I would rather sacrifice

that and pay you a hundred dollars more than to miss getting this picture.'

"What could I do? Here was a man — not rich but poor, rather — who was advancing his money liberally to me at a time of sore need, and who asked of me in return nothing more than a service that would save to him his best customer, and at the same time pay him a liberal profit. He had already stood my friend when I needed friendship. There was only one course open to me. I answered that I would paint the picture. I accepted his advance of a hundred dollars. I rented a studio flat, found a girl to share it with me, and set to work.

"The result was altogether satisfactory. I so far idealized the woman I saw in the mirrors round about me, that I think even you or Kate would not recognize the picture as a portrait of me; but it was far more beautiful than any one woman ever was, and it delighted the woman who had ordered it. She was so pleased, indeed, that she came to me with three other, though smaller commissions. It seems she was furnishing a home for her daughter, who was presently to be

married, and further than that, it was her practice to give pictures for birthday and Christmas presents.

“ But all this is apart from the story I have to tell. A few weeks after I had established myself in my new studio, Edward Cameron's sister visited me — not in friendship, but with purely business intent. She was brutally and insultingly frank. She explained to me that she now had complete control of her brother's affairs, and that it was her duty to arrange them to the best advantage of the estate. Then she told me something else.

“ ‘ During her last illness,’ she said, ‘ my mother added a codicil to her will, in which she left to you five government, four per cent. bonds, of the face value of one thousand dollars each, and of a market value nearly or quite one-third greater. But I have consulted my lawyers and they tell me the bequest can probably be successfully contested on the ground of undue influence. I have come to suggest a compromise, to save trouble and expense all around.’ ”

“ And what did you reply? ” asked Warren

Rhett. "I sincerely hope you did not consent to any compromise."

"No, I did not. I told her she might have saved the expense of the consultation with her lawyers, for that, in view of her attitude, I was altogether too proud a woman to accept one dollar of the legacy. I told her that if she would, at her own expense, have her lawyers draw up a paper by which I could relinquish the bequest I would execute it under their direction. She asked me to call upon her lawyers for that purpose, but I answered that it was for them to call upon me, and that, too, at my convenience. I appointed an hour for their call, and added: 'You will bear in mind that they are your lawyers, on your business, and that they must look to you for pay for their time in visiting me. And another thing: lawyers are apt to keep people waiting even when there is a positive appointment made. It may be worth your while to tell yours that I will not be kept waiting. I have set two o'clock sharp on next Wednesday afternoon for their call. If they are here at that hour I will give them half an hour and sign the papers. If they are one minute

later they will find me gone, and as I am going to leave the city, it may be many moons before they can secure another appointment, even if I should not change my mind and decide not to sign the papers at all.'

"She promised to have the lawyers wait upon me promptly, and then she turned to another subject.

" 'Now about this so-called marriage of yours with my brother,' she said. 'My lawyers tell me that so long as you hold to it, it is probably binding, but that upon your suit it would be declared null and void from the beginning — that there never was any marriage at all, and that both my brother and you are entirely free of entanglement in the matter.'

"I sought to interrupt her, but she asked me to hear her out. She went on to explain that of course, so long as I should hold the legal relation of wife to her brother, I could claim maintenance from his estate. But even that, she said, might be contested in the courts, and she added, 'Of course you have no money with which to carry on litigation. So as I want to be generous and con-

siderate, I make this proposition. If you will consent to have a suit brought in your name to annul the marriage I will give you an allowance of one hundred dollars a month from my brother's estate, so long as you live.' "

" What answer did you make to that ? " Rhett asked.

" None. I simply rose, opened the door, and told her to be gone. She tried to argue, she tried to plead ; but I resolutely refused to listen or to answer. You see I wanted nothing from Edward Cameron's estate, but I could not consent to have it decreed by a court that my marriage with him had been a mockery, and still less could I do that for money."

Rhett was standing now, and bending over the girl in his eagerness to hear the last detail of her story. With intense solicitude he asked :

" You did not accept any money from that woman — then or afterward ? "

" Of course not. How could I ? What do you mean ? "

" Only that if you had done so, I should have taken the next train for New York, and should

myself have returned the last dollar of it with compound interest. I love you, Hazel, as you very well know, and it is my self-assumed privilege to protect you even against any mistakes you may have made under the distressing circumstances you have described."

"But surely you could not have suspected me of so mean and humiliating a thing as that?"

"Not for an instant! I only asked assurance from your own lips. Go on. Tell me the rest."

"There isn't much else to tell. The lawyers — after the manner of lawyers — failed to appear at the time appointed. I had said that I would not wait one minute beyond the hour, but, to make allowance for unavoidable delays, I waited for full fifteen minutes beyond the time set. Then I left for Mannamac. You see I had a commission to make some humorous pictures for reproduction on Christmas cards and the like, and I wanted to use the quaint and comical little darkeys down here as my models. Kate had been pressing me to come to her in her loneliness, and I had engaged my passage by an Old Dominion steam-

ship which was to sail at three-thirty that day, so I had barely time in which to reach my ship. As we sailed down the coast I thought the matter over, and I was glad I had signed no papers of any description. I was — and I still am — fully determined never to receive so much as a dollar or a cent either of the legacy the dear old lady left me, or of moneys that I might claim from Edward Cameron's estate, but in view of the insulting treatment I have received, I have decided to sign nothing, and to leave that woman to wrestle with the difficulty as best she can.

"I left no word at the studio or elsewhere, as to my future whereabouts. Indeed, as my girl companion had to go away at the same time that I did, we sub-let the studio, and neither of us left any address behind. That was six months ago, and I have been here ever since. But they seem somehow to have found me out."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, yesterday, while you were out in the fields, one of the lawyers called here, but, when he announced himself, Kate was equal to the emergency. She always is, you know, when there is a

real emergency. I had told her that if any one of the lawyers should follow me up, which I did not expect, though I feared it as a possibility, I should not see him. So when he appeared, I ran upstairs, and Kate calmly told him she didn't know where I could be found, which was true enough — for she didn't know in which room I was hiding. Charley Danforth was standing by her side, but, without a moment's hesitation, and without 'turning a hair,' as you horsemen say, she coolly told the man that my attorney was Mr. Charles Danforth, whose office was at the Court-House village, and that perhaps his best course would be to consult Mr. Danforth. Charley bore it all beautifully. He even played host in your stead, and, without revealing himself, gave the visitor a glass of peach and honey, and then bade him a cordial farewell. I suppose the lawyer will call upon him as soon as he gets back from Richmond, but I have asked him to say that as the papers I was to sign were not presented at the time appointed, and as I have no interest in signing them, I now decline to do anything whatever."

"Perfectly right. Sign nothing. 'Stand pat'

upon that determination. Now I want you to make me your *attorney in fact*, as Charley Danforth is your attorney at law, so that I may act for you in case of necessity. I have an idea that that lawyer will come hither again when he finds that Danforth has gone to Richmond. I imagine he thinks it would be easier to deal with a young woman than with a shrewd lawyer like Danforth. Say that you authorize me to act for you, and if he comes, as he pretty certainly will, you need have no fear of consequences."

"Of course you may act for me," she answered, and then, with that childlike innocence which even her experiences had not sufficed to impair, she added:

"Who could have a better right? You remember what I said to you that night on horse-back?"

"Wait a minute," said Rhett, going to a desk that stood in the wide hallway, or passage, through the house — after the custom of plantation houses — "I want to be fully armed with authority to represent you."

With that he wrote upon a sheet of paper:

"Warren Rhett, Esq.,

"I hereby appoint you my attorney in fact to represent all my interests, to act for me and in my name, and whatsoever you may do under this general power of attorney, I hereby ratify and confirm as fully as if I were personally present, doing the same. Given under my hand and seal this twenty-fifth day of November, 18—."

Then he called Henry, the dining-room servant, and Diana, Kate's maid, both of whom were proud of their ability to write, and still prouder of being called upon to witness a legal document, "jes' like white folks," as Diana said, and the power of attorney was executed.

Hazel's was a supersensitive nature, in spite of her superb capacity for self-control, and Rhett, whose perceptions were tenderly alert in everything that concerned her, observed that the telling of her story, and the recalling of all its painful incidents, had seriously unnerved her. He turned to her and said:

"Now the first use I shall make of my authority as your attorney in fact, is to order you to go to

bed. Diana, prepare a hot bath for your Miss Hazel, and after she has taken it, put her to bed, close the shutters, draw the curtains so closely that no ray of sunlight shall peep into her room, and then see to it that there shall be no noises anywhere about the place. There's a boy flailing rugs out there under the trees at the back of the house. Stop that at once. Your Miss Hazel must have peace and quietude, and I shall hold you responsible for that."

"But —" interrupted Hazel, "who is to look after the household affairs?"

"I will," he answered. "And believe me, I am not inexperienced. I've run this house many a time for weeks together with nobody but myself to give an order, and I've entertained guests under those conditions. And besides, you know my gospel, that 'Love is the sum of it all.' You need rest, and I have told you that I love you. Nothing else matters."



"JES' LIKE WHITE FOLKS." — *Page 345.*

XXIII

A GENTLEMAN'S ULTIMATUM

WHEN Diana came down the stairs half an hour later, Rhett called her to him and asked :

“ Has your Miss Hazel gone regularly to bed ? ”

It should be explained that in Virginia there was always a well-recognized distinction between lying down in a wrapper and going “ regularly to bed.” The latter phrase meant that one completely disrobed, put on night-clothes, and put oneself between the sheets as if going to bed for the night.

“ Yes, sir. She’s tuckered out,” answered Diana, whose education had not involved the evil of eliminating an expressive dialect. “ She’s had her bath an’ she’s gone regularly to bed, jes’ as ef it was night, or as ef she was sick, an’ I’ve used up mos’ all of a paper o’ pins a stickin’ the curtains to the window jambs so’s no sunlight kin creep in.

You'se mighty precious o' Miss Hazel, ain't you, Mas' Warren? "

" Yes, Diana. And she's worth it, don't you think? "

" Cou'se she is. She's the sweetest young lady as ever come to Mannamac in my time. She's so gentle, you know. W'y, she don't even order me about — not even me. Ef she wants a pail o' hot water she says ' Diana,' — an' she don't interrupt it into ' Dinah,' neither, but says ' Diana ' clear out plain — she says, ' Diana, won't you please bring me a pail o' hot water from the kitchen,' an' then I feel jes' as ef I'd ruther die than have that hot water short o' the bilin' p'int. You see she's so sweet an' persuadin', an' she's so — well you know how it is, Mas' Warren — anybody as wouldn't be more'n happy to wait on her would be a contumacious idiot."

" Where did you get that word, ' contumacious,' Diana? " asked Rhett, quizzically.

" It was in one o' my lessons at school," answered the young mulatto woman, proudly. " You see I remember my education. Ain't ' contumacious ' the right word, Mas' Warren? "

"Of course it is," he answered. "Coupled with the noun 'idiot,' and applied as you apply it, it seems to me admirable. But now, Diana, I want your Miss Hazel to sleep and rest as long as she can. Here you!" he cried to a housemaid who was starting up the stairs with a pail and a scrubbing-brush. "Come here. You are not to do anything up-stairs till Diana tells you. Go off and busy yourself with something else. Go and scrub the back porch — it needs it — and mind you, if you make any noise in doing it I shall want to know why. Diana, I want you to get your knitting or your needlework, or whatever else you have in hand, and seat yourself at the foot of those stairs in the most comfortable chair you can find. I want you to stay there till your Miss Hazel calls for you, even if it takes all day and all night, and till she does call you, you are not to allow anybody — white or black or mixed — to go up those stairs upon any pretext. Here's a dollar to buy some pretty thing with. Now you understand your duty?"

Diana accepted the dollar and indicated that she understood. She wondered "what in the

name o' kingdom come" was to become of the up-stairs scrubbing and window washing, but she ventured no protest — no suggestion of remonstrance. She slipped the dollar bill into her corsage, seated herself at the foot of the stairs, and reflected that, for this day at least, Mas' Warren was "a runnin' o' the house." It was a part of Diana's duty to see that the housemaids should on this day of the week do the necessary scouring above stairs, and Diana was a duty-loving person. But like everybody else on the plantation — white and black alike — she recognized the master's word as law. Moreover, it was easy for Diana to shed responsibility, and, fortified behind Warren Rhett's command, she would very cheerfully have left every bed in the house unmade, if that task had not been fulfilled some hours before.

Having arranged for Hazel's quietude and rest, Rhett mounted his mare and rode out to the fields to inspect the work in progress there.

On his return to the Great House — the day having become comfortably warm — he seated himself in the porch to await the lawyer's coming.

For Kate had sent him a hurried note by special messenger while waiting for her train, and in it she had said :

“ You must put Hazel out of the way somewhere before he gets there — of course I mean that lawyer — even if you have to send her over to Hallie Harvey’s, and if you do that, please ask her to tell Hallie I have forgotten what width ribbon it was that she wanted, but I’ll get several widths and those she don’t want I’ll keep myself. You know a woman can always make use of ribbon. No, I suppose you don’t. Men never do know anything except politics and business, and Latin and a lot of other useless things — anyhow you tell Hazel to tell Hallie what I have said. And don’t let that fellow see Hazel. You see when I got here I was thirsty, and the soda-water at the store is good enough, and I really like soda-water, but I see they wash their glasses only in cold water after everybody has drunk out of them, so I simply had to go to the tavern for a drink of water, and Sallie — the maid there, who used to be at Mannamac — I’m sure she wants to come back now, but I didn’t say anything about that —

well, Sallie told me the lawyer had ordered a horse and buggy for just after dinner, and you know the tavern dinner is served at noon, though I never could understand how people could want their dinner at that hour, and of course he's going out to Mannamac to see Hazel, and he mustn't. You'll know how to manage it some way, won't you, Warren, dear? The train is here and waiting for me — these conductors are very nice, don't you think? "

Rhett had said nothing to Hazel about the receipt of this note of warning, but having got her to bed, and having done everything possible to prevent the disturbance of her rest, he lay in wait, as it were, for the lawyer. In anticipation of that person's probable coming, Warren Rhett fell into one of his half-humorous, half-cynical moods, resolving to get some amusement out of the coming game of fence with the lawyer, but at the same time determining to find out a good deal more than Hazel knew as to the facts of the case as they now stood, and as to the attitude of Edward Cameron's sister, whom, of course, the lawyer represented.

It was three o'clock — an hour before the Man-namac dinner-time — when the lawyer drove up to the horse-block on the inner curve of "the circle." Rhett received him cordially, introducing himself and saying, "I believe this is not our first meeting, Mr. Farlow. I remember that you cross-examined me once in a case in which you represented my antagonist."

"Why, to be sure," answered Farlow; "and I'm delighted to meet you again, though I have a very vivid impression that you distinctly got the better of me in that cross-examination."

"Oh, that was only because the facts were all against your clients. I do not understand that counsel are expected to manufacture their facts — it is enough if they color and distort them. However, we need not hark back to that. As I completely won in that litigation I bear no malice, and I hope you bear none."

"Malice? Why, my dear Mr. Rhett, if a lawyer went about hating the people opposed to his clients, or even those of them who beat his clients in the courts, he would not only become a very malevolent and a very unhappy person, but

he would presently have to close his office for want of business. It has very often happened to me to be retained by the very people whom I had beaten in court. You see — ”

“ I quite understand. But permit me. Here, boy — take this gentleman’s horse to the stable; have him fed and curried, and have his fetlocks thoroughly washed. They haven’t been cleansed in a month. Tell Bob to comb out his mane and tail. He would be a very presentable animal if Botts would only take decent care of him. You hired him from Botts, did you not? ”

“ I suppose that’s his name. At any rate he’s the hotel-keeper.”

“ That’s Botts,” answered Rhett. “ But the shack he keeps is a tavern, not a hotel. The distinction seems to me important. Does it not impress you in the same way, in view of the meals, and especially the service that you get — or rather do not get there? ”

In spite of the seriousness of purpose that had inspired his visit, Farlow laughed and answered:

“ Well, perhaps the word ‘ tavern ’ would describe that hostelry more accurately than

'hotel' does. But I know nothing whatever about horses, except that their heads are on their front ends, and so I raised no objection when this one was brought to me. He seems to be an animal of peculiar disposition. Several times on my way over here he suddenly stopped in the middle of the road and refused to proceed further. If I touched him with the whip, or otherwise urged him, he backed in a way that threatened to dump me and the buggy into the bushes by the roadside."

"Balky, eh? Well, it is just like Botts to provide a stranger with a balky horse, because the longer and the more frequently the horse balks, the longer your journey must be. He is charging you by the hour, I suppose?"

"Yes — seventy-five cents an hour, he said."

"Don't think of paying it. Twenty-five cents an hour is the established price at the Court-House. Offer him that and 'stand pat.' However, that's your business, not mine. Take a seat. It is pleasanter here in the porch than indoors. Dinner will be served in an hour, and you must share it with me. My stepmother, who is

the mistress here, went to Richmond this morning, so we shall have no gracious feminine presence at the head of the table, but you and I may enjoy our dinner, in spite of that."

"I had hoped," said Farlow, "to meet Miss — or Mrs. — Hazel Cameron to-day. Is she not here?"

"Which?" asked Rhett, and he added no word of explanation.

"I'm afraid I don't catch your meaning," answered the other.

"Why, which is it that you want to meet — Miss or Mrs. Hazel Cameron?"

"Surely there are not two of them. I mean only that it still remains for the courts to determine whether it is Miss or Mrs. Cameron. You see there was a certain ceremony — supposed at the time to be a marriage — but the courts have not yet passed upon that."

"Pardon me for interrupting," said Rhett, in the drawling tone which he always adopted when he had either a very serious or a humorous purpose to serve, "but it may clear things up a bit and enable us to discuss matters to better advantage,

if I tell you that *I am both Miss and Mrs. Hazel Cameron.*"

The man rose from his chair in astonishment. Here was a great, hulking, aggressively masculine man, tall, broad of shoulder, muscular, and massive, claiming to be the daintily delicate woman whom he had driven over to Mannamac to see.

"I confess I don't understand you," said the lawyer.

"Oh, it is simple enough. I hold a general and sweeping and all-comprehensive power of attorney from Hazel Cameron — be she Miss or Mistress — which you may read if you choose."

With that he handed the paper to Farlow. After the lawyer had read it, Rhett continued:

"Now you understand that from this hour forth, all the dealings of your clients, or of yourself as attorney, with Hazel Cameron, must be direct dealings with me. What is it you want?"

"Well, we are trying to arrange things," answered the other, vaguely. "You see there was a pretended marriage —"

"There was nothing of the kind," answered

Rhett quickly — almost angrily. Then he controlled himself and adopted the Socratic method of asking questions.

“ There was a regular license for that marriage, was there not ? ”

The lawyer, careful not to commit himself, answered :

“ I really don't know, I suppose there was. I never saw the document.”

“ Is a license necessary to the validity of a marriage in New York State ? ” asked Rhett.

“ Well — no,” answered the other.

“ Were not Edward Cameron's mother and Edward Cameron's sister present at that marriage, consenting to it, and urging and instigating it ? ”

“ On those points I am not informed.”

“ Then as a lawyer you seem to me strangely remiss. Pardon me if I say that while I do not believe your statement, I recognize your right, diplomatically, to withhold that bit of information. Fortunately I am able to prove the facts, not only by the hospital attendants who were there, but also by many autographic letters written, before and after the event, by Edward

Cameron's mother to Hazel Cameron. So I have no need of admissions from you."

This was a pure guess on Rhett's part. Hazel had told him nothing whatever about any letters that had passed between her and Mrs. Cameron; but knowing as he did the propensity of women, especially under emotional conditions, to write letters to each other, he very safely assumed the existence of the letters.

"However, we will not discuss that matter further. What is it that you want Hazel Cameron to do?"

"Well, I have come down here to see if we couldn't amicably adjust the matters in dispute, and, under instruction of my client, I am prepared to deal very generously with Miss — or Mrs. — Cameron, if I may see her."

"And precisely what is your notion of generous dealing in such a case?" asked Rhett. "You see, as we are dealing with matters of law and equity, and as you are a lawyer, while I am not, it is desirable to agree upon the precise meaning of terms. Would you mind saying exactly what you mean?"

“ Well, of course, under the circumstances, we are prepared to concede that Miss Cameron is entitled to some consideration. She has relinquished the legacy left her by Edward Cameron’s mother, and — ”

“ Has she? ”

“ Yes. She agreed with Miss Beatrice Cameron about that.”

“ Have you the papers with you? And may I look at them? ”

“ There are no papers. The two women agreed upon that, but Miss or Mrs. Hazel Cameron left New York so suddenly that the papers were not signed.”

“ Have you anything to show for that? You see, as Hazel Cameron’s attorney, I must take nothing for granted, and particularly nothing to the detriment of her interests.”

“ Surely she will not deny the conversation — ”

“ Pardon me. It is not a question of what she will deny or what she will admit. She has placed her affairs absolutely in my hands, and I have no right to admit anything, until evidence of it is presented.”

"Well, she voluntarily offered to relinquish all claim to that legacy."

"What papers have you to show for that?"

"None. The promise was oral."

"And therefore worthless," said Rhett.
"Were there any conditions?"

"Well, yes. She set an hour at which the papers should be brought to her for execution, but as I was engaged in court that day, I simply could not keep the appointment, and when I called later Miss — or Mrs. — Cameron was gone."

"I really do not see what I, as Hazel Cameron's attorney in fact, have to do with your failure to keep an appointment. However, that is a matter aside and quite indifferent. What is it that you now want Hazel Cameron to do? I'm not a lawyer, you know, but a plain man of business. So it will be best if you come straight to the point and tell me in simple words what you want."

"That is precisely what I wish to do, Mr. Rhett. You see we wish to avoid litigation with all of its unpleasant features. To that end we are prepared to deal generously with Miss — or Mrs. —

Cameron, if only she will sign certain papers that I have in my gripsack."

"Again I must ask you what you mean by 'dealing generously.' Would you mind translating that into terms that I — a mere business man — can understand?"

"Well, we are prepared to settle upon Miss — or Mrs. — Hazel Cameron, an income of five thousand dollars a year so long as she shall live, if she will relinquish all her claims upon the estate of Edward Cameron, as his widow — I should say his wife."

"When did Edward Cameron die?" asked Rhett, catching at the slip of the tongue, but speaking in a tone as calm and even as if he had been asking at what hour his interlocutor had driven away from the Court-House village.

"Oh, I didn't mean to imply that he was dead!" exclaimed the other. "I only meant —"

"I quite understand. The truth slipped out by sheer accident. When did Edward Cameron die?"

"I did not say he was dead," said the lawyer.

"I know you didn't. But you may as well tell

me all about it now, for by a brief telegram to my partners in New York I can set men at work who will to-morrow telegraph me the day and the hour and the minute of his death, together with such details as I may desire as to his funeral, his will, and all the rest of it. Come, man! Tell me the truth. When did Edward Cameron die? No matter what you tell me, or refuse to tell me, I shall know all the facts within twenty-four or forty-eight hours at furthest. Now we may as well come to an explicit understanding. Hazel Cameron's affairs are absolutely in my hands. Without in any way consulting her or permitting you to see her, I am going to insist upon every shadow of right that is hers. Neither you nor your client shall in any way smirch her name by the pretence that there was aught of fraud or falsity in her marriage with Edward Cameron. His sister knows, and you know, that she entered into that marriage very reluctantly, and only in response to the earnest, passionate pleadings of himself, his sister, and his mother. Your client wants to represent her as an adventuress who took advantage of his condition to secure the rights of

a wife in his estate. You propose to pay her for relinquishing her claim to be an honest widow — that is to say, you propose to pay her blackmail, and treat her as a blackmailer who must be silenced. You shall do nothing of the kind. She will fight this thing out in the courts, yielding no jot or tittle of her right.”

“Allow me to suggest that that will be very expensive,” said Farlow.

“And your client is reckoning upon the fact that Hazel Cameron has no money as her safeguard? Very well. You are reckoning without your host. I told you awhile ago that I am Hazel Cameron, and it so happens that I have not only a comfortably fat bank account, but a business that pays me every year more money than I can conveniently dispose of. It will be something more than a pleasure to me to pay the cost of whatever litigation this controversy may involve. I shall confront you with the very ablest lawyers at the New York bar, and at every step I shall fight you for Hazel Cameron’s good name. Pardon me a moment.”

With that he went to the desk in the hall and

wrote something on a sheet of paper. At the dining-room door he spoke to Henry:

"Have one of the chaps bring the palfrey, and carry this message to the Court-House," he said. Then, turning to the lawyer, he handed him the despatch he had written. It read in this wise:

"Retain best lawyers in New York for me in case of Cameron against Cameron. Get Evarts, Southmayd & Choate, Carter, Coudert, Sands, Bowers, and whoever else is best — all that are best. It is a fight for a good name. Money doesn't figure in it. Do this to-day. All expense mine."

"There!" he said. "Now you understand in what spirit and with what determination I am going to fight this thing to a finish. My sole concern is for Hazel Cameron's good name. In defence of that I am prepared to spend ten times the money that may be coming to her from Mrs. Cameron's legacy and from Edward Cameron's estate. I know nothing of court procedure, but that telegram — here, Jake," to the negro boy who had ridden up on the palfrey, "take this telegram to the Court-House and have it sent off at

once. Here's a two-dollar bill. Pay for it out of that."

Then he turned to the lawyer and said:

"Now I've given you my whole case. What is yours? I've told you what I mean to do. Now be a good fellow and tell me in return what your programme is."

Farlow hesitated for awhile, and then, carefully weighing his words, said:

"It is always the policy of our firm to settle things out of court — by compromise. It saves friction and hard feeling and expense. Why should we not agree upon a compromise in this case?"

Rhett rose, emptied his pipe, refilled it, and called to a negro chap to bring him a coal from the kitchen with which to light it anew. Only after that was done did he reply, and then it was interrogatively.

"Does it occur to you to reflect what a compromise means in a case like this?"

"Well, for one thing, it means a great saving of expense and worry, and all the rest of it."

“ Those are details of no importance whatever. I am prepared to take upon myself the expense, the worry, and all the rest of it. But a compromise would mean something else. It would be an admission of dishonor. Hazel Cameron, in perfectly good faith and very reluctantly, married Edward Cameron. Edward Cameron’s mother, at whose earnest solicitation Hazel consented to the marriage, took the girl to her heart as a daughter, and when she died, she left her a legacy as a testimonial of her affection and her esteem. Every step that has since been taken by your client has been in derogation of Hazel Cameron’s dignity, and in denial of the sincerity of her action and attitude. That is something that I will not tolerate. Any compromise — even though it should abate no more than one dollar, or one cent, of Hazel Cameron’s claim — would be an acknowledgment by her, or on her behalf, that her position and her rights were open to some sort of question. I will consent to nothing of the kind. Whatever else happens, her reputation must be protected from every shadow of suspicion, and fortunately I am in a position to do

that perfectly. I shall see to it that the case is made clear."

"What, then, do you insist upon?" asked Farlow; and he made haste to add: "You see our firm always regards a settlement out of court as preferable to litigation, and we shall advise our client to consent to any reasonable terms that will avoid a contest in the courts."

"What I insist upon is this: that Hazel Cameron's rights, both as the legatee of Edward Cameron's mother, and as the lawful widow of Edward Cameron, shall be fully recognized; that the legacy left her by the elder Mrs. Cameron in the will of which your client, Miss Beatrice Cameron, is executrix, shall be promptly paid to her; that her rights of dower in Edward Cameron's estate shall be recognized, and the sums due her on that account paid. Those are my terms, and I shall insist upon them without any shadow of turning — because in that way only can Hazel Cameron's womanhood be vindicated against the aspersions your client has wantonly cast upon it."

"Your demand is a merciless one," said the lawyer.

"Yes — as merciless as the multiplication table. I have meant that it should be so. Now understand me. It is not money that we fight for in this case, for not one dollar or one penny of the money involved will Hazel Cameron ever use for herself. Every dollar of it will go to the Children's Aid Society, the Home for Incurables, the Actors' Benevolent Fund, and other charities. But every dollar of it must be paid into her hands, to do with as she pleases. That is my ultimatum. If your client accepts it there will be peace. If she refuses there will be war, with Warren Rhett for commander-in-chief of the enemy's forces, and with the very ablest lieutenant-generals that the bar of New York can furnish for the campaign. Now which shall it be — peace or war?"

Farlow hesitated before answering. After awhile he said:

"On the whole, I should advise peace — and I think that would be the advice of my firm. But there are difficulties."

"I quite understand that," answered Rhett.
"You mean that your client has taken out letters

of administration upon her brother's estate, and incidentally has sworn that he was unmarried? Of course he left a will, but he made his mother his executrix, and she died before he did — so that his sister, as next of kin, and indeed as the only kin, applied for letters of administration and got them."

Warren Rhett was "fishing" for information. He knew absolutely nothing of what had been done in the case, but he shrewdly guessed it all, and confidently set it forth as a body of facts that served to explain the difficulties of which the lawyer had spoken. As his conjecture was partially, though not wholly correct, it served his purpose well.

Farlow was the senior member of his firm, and he was a thoroughly well-equipped lawyer. He saw clearly how completely Warren Rhett was master of the situation in this case. He asked Rhett's permission to stroll about the grounds alone for awhile, in order that he might think out a course of action.

"Certainly," answered Rhett. "You shall stroll to your heart's content, or if you prefer I

will have you shown to a room where you shall be uninterrupted while you think. At this moment I see Henry coming to announce dinner. Let us dismiss the whole matter while we eat. After dinner you shall be left alone in any fashion that suits you, and for so long as you please. But during dinner let us forget everything but good fellowship."

Before ushering his guest into the dining-room, Rhett briefly spoke apart with Diana.

"Tell your Miss Hazel if she is awake, that she is not to come below stairs upon any account until you notify her that this man is gone. Take her dinner up to her on a tray."

Diana, proud of her responsibility, gave assurances of her faithfulness and her discretion, and the two gentlemen went to dinner.

XXIV

HAZEL INTERRUPTS

WHEN the dinner was over Farlow and Rhett lighted their long-stemmed pipes, with a chap in attendance to renew the coals from the kitchen whenever renewal should be needed. Farlow was obviously thinking, and Rhett gave him the fullest possible leisure in which to think. He was satisfied that he had given him adequate occasion for thought. Several times the lawyer strolled out into the house grounds, while Rhett sat still in the porch, awaiting results with that calm self-confidence which is apt to dominate the mind of a man who feels and knows that his case is one in which no possible loophole can be discovered.

Finally Farlow, relighting his pipe, seated himself in a large oaken armchair and reopened the conversation.

“I may as well say to you,” he began, “that in certain details your conjectures are inaccurate. My client is executor of her mother’s will, as you have assumed, but no will of Edward Cameron’s has been found, and as yet no application has been made for letters of administration upon his estate. We advised against that, until such time as matters could be adjusted with Miss — or Mrs. — Hazel Cameron.”

“Might I inquire why you gave that advice? Was it because your client had destroyed the will that you say has not been found, thereby laying herself liable to criminal prosecution? You needn’t answer that question unless you choose. I can easily discover all the facts for myself, and I recognize your right to maintain silence.”

Farlow, as if sorely beset with perplexing uncertainty, again strolled out into the grounds. Returning presently, he said:

“Mr. Rhett, you know how arbitrarily and unadvisedly women sometimes act in a case like this. You are a chivalrous gentleman, and I want to remind you that it is a helpless woman you are dealing with in this case. You have taken pains

strongly to impress it upon my mind that it is not money your client is combating for, but dignity, recognition of right, and all else that concerns her as a woman. Now, without even consulting my partners — for this case is completely in my hands — I am going to make an appeal to you, for mercy to a woman who may have been unjust, and who may have made mistakes of a more serious character. I do not say that she has done either. I only say that she may have done both. Now suppose she should be willing to make every possible atonement — to put Miss — or Mrs. — Hazel Cameron securely in possession of all her rights and dignities, so that no breath of scandal or suspicion shall ever fall upon her — now in that case would you not enter into some arrangement whereby we may avoid a litigation that might involve very uncomfortable consequences to the gentlewoman who is my client? I appeal to your generosity of mind.”

Rhett answered promptly: “I have no disposition to persecute Miss Beatrice Cameron, and certainly the gentlewoman whom I represent has no such disposition. If you can devise a means

by which Hazel Cameron's marital rights shall be absolutely and unequivocally recognized by Miss Beatrice Cameron — recognized, I mean, in a way of which the law and the courts would take cognizance — I shall certainly not feel moved to proceed to extremities, and to prosecute Miss Beatrice Cameron for having destroyed her brother's will."

"You will bear witness, Mr. Rhett, that I have not admitted the destruction of the will."

"Oh, of course, and very willingly. I have other and quite adequate means of information. But let me complete what I was saying. The recognition of Hazel Cameron's rights must come from Miss Beatrice Cameron, and it must be complete, exhaustive, and unequivocal. It must be accompanied by a certified check for the amount of Mrs. Cameron's legacy to Hazel Cameron, and by a request that Hazel Cameron, as the widow of Edward Cameron, shall take out letters of administration upon his estate. When such a request comes, accompanied by the certified check I have mentioned, you shall have such reply as Hazel Cameron, acting under my advice, shall see fit to give."

"Then you demand that we shall give up our whole case?"

"I don't think you have any case. For the rest, I demand that everything which has been done to humiliate Hazel Cameron, and to cast reflection of wrong-doing upon her, shall be undone. Miss Beatrice Cameron practically ordered her out of her house after her mother's death, and before her mother's funeral. In return Miss Beatrice Cameron must send her an invitation to be her guest in that house, with no conditions whatever, and the invitation must be a warmly cordial one. Those are my terms. It is that or a fight to a finish in the courts."

"And what do you promise in return for all these concessions?"

"Absolutely nothing whatsoever. I am not bargaining. I am dictating terms of surrender. You and your client can accept or reject them at will. You can have peace or war as you please. But if you choose war, it shall be war in earnest."

Farlow sat silent for awhile. Then he said:

"I wonder if you would let me hold this matter

open until to-morrow afternoon. I want to communicate by telegraph with my partners and my client — in cipher of course, so that there shall be no scandal bred at the Court-House.”

“Certainly. There is no hurry. Come over to dinner to-morrow afternoon, and tell me what your answer is. I should urge you to stay overnight except that you want to telegraph. And by the way, even that can be managed, if you have your private cipher code with you. You can write your despatches here and I will send messengers to the Court-House with them, and with instructions to the station-master to send all replies to you here.”

“No, I think I shall go back to the tavern. I can think more calmly there. But I want to say to you, Mr. Rhett, that Miss Beatrice Cameron is a very ill woman — largely in consequence of these complexities, and that it may require some time to fulfil your conditions, if indeed we can fulfil them at all.”

“I am very sorry,” he said. “Pray give her all the time she may want, and assure her that all I demand is the complete exoneration of Hazel

Cameron from all charges of mercenary self-seeking. That exoneration I must insist upon."

Fifteen minutes before this time, the negro boy whose function it was to bring the mail from the Court-House, had ridden up to the back door and delivered his parcel of letters. One of these had been sent up to Hazel. Just as the two men stood there awaiting the coming from the stable of the vehicle that was to bear Mr. Farlow away, Hazel descended the stairs and confronted the pair.

"I think you two gentlemen need not go any further with your negotiations," she said; "Warren, I wish you would order the carriage for ten o'clock to-night. I am going to New York by the eleven o'clock train."

And by way of explanation she handed to him the letter she had received.

"Read that," she said, "and you will understand."

The letter was from Beatrice Cameron, and he read it eagerly — the more so because, instead of a formal address, it began "My Dear Sister."

The letter went on:

"I have longed to write to you, but I have not

known where you were until now. I want you to forgive me — and if you can, I want you to love me. I am ill — unto death I think — and I want to see you and hear from your own lips that I am forgiven. I beg you to come to me. For Edward's sake, for the sake of the memory of my mother who loved you and whom you loved, I beg you to come to me and tell me you forgive me. It is fittest that I should go to you, because I am the offender and not you — but I am helpless, bed-ridden, hopelessly incapable of activity of any kind. Will you not, in your great generosity of soul, come to me in my hour of need and tell me you forgive? I am too nervous, too weak, too utterly helpless to write more particularly. I can only say I am sorry, and ask you to forgive. If I must die, as I think I must, I want your arms about me at the last, so that I may feel that the wrong I did you is forgiven."

When he handed the letter back to Hazel after reading it, Rhett said:

"You are right. Go!"

"Yes," she answered, "'Love is the sum of it all.'"

Turning to Farlow, the girl said:

"You came here as a lawyer, representing my sister, Beatrice Cameron. There is no longer any controversy between her and me. I am going to New York to-night to care for her in her illness. You and Mr. Rhett need not go further with your negotiations. When she and I throw our arms about each other lovingly, there will be nothing to settle. But you, Mr. Farlow, must remain to supper. Mr. Rhett will have one of the servants drive your horse back to the Court-House, and you will ride back with him and me in the Mannamac carriage."

"And may I escort you to New York?" he asked.

"Mr. Rhett will escort me, I think," she said, and Rhett answered promptly, "Of course," whereupon she added: .

"But we shall be glad to have you with us as a member of the party, Mr. Farlow."

Seeing that he had at no time been introduced to this gracious gentlewoman, Farlow thought of her courteous recognition of himself as something peculiarly "complimentary." That was the word

he thought of, for want of a better one to express his appreciation of her graciousness.

He remained to supper, and a little before ten o'clock the three set out to catch the eleven o'clock train at the Court-House. On the way they were silent, except that Hazel hummed a tune. It was the melody she had written to the words: "Love is the sum of it all."

As Farlow was present, there was, naturally and necessarily, no private converse between Warren Rhett and Hazel Cameron.

Possibly Hazel had meant that matters should be so arranged. Who knows? Who ever does know what a woman means, particularly when she loves?

XXV

THE SUM OF IT ALL

IT was Warren Rhett's habit to do things and to get things done. The moment he learned of Hazel's purpose to start for New York by the eleven o'clock train, he reflected that the Pullman cars on that train were scheduled to go no farther than Richmond, and that Hazel would have to make a change of cars there at two o'clock in the morning. He went to the desk and wrote some telegrams. He sent a boy with them to the Court-House, instructing him to wait for replies. Just before the little party entered the carriage the answers came back. Rhett read them and said to Hazel:

"I have engaged the stateroom on the sleeping-car for you, Hazel, and fortunately you'll not have to make that awkward change at Richmond. The car will go through to New York."

"*You* arranged that?" she asked.

"Yes — why not? It is very disagreeable to change cars in the middle of the night."

The two were talking apart. The girl looked at him intently, with tears in her eyes, but she spoke no word. Perhaps she could not. He bent forward and caressed her, taking his sufficient answer in that way. Then he said to her:

"Edward Cameron has gone to his final rest. You are all mine now."

"Yes — I guessed that, and I am all yours now, for 'Love is the sum of it all.'"

.

In New York Rhett learned that his firm's bid for the Zambesi bridges had been accepted, as he had anticipated that it would be. He sent a hurried note to Hazel, saying:

"I believe you like travel. My firm has just secured a very profitable contract to build some railroad bridges and the like in Africa. One of my partners will superintend the construction work, but as ours is a very short-time contract, I very greatly want to superintend in person the landing of materials at Alexandria and their ship-

ment to the interior. Why should we not be married at once and sail for the Mediterranean immediately? If you like, when we get there, we'll get a dahabeah—that's a kind of boat you know—and go up to the second cataract of the Nile. I think the trip will rest and interest you. But we must decide quickly."

For reply Hazel wrote back:

"It shall be as you say. Henceforth everything shall be as you say, for 'Love is the sum of it all,' and I am very happy."

.

While waiting for her answer Rhett telegraphed to Kate asking:

"When are you and Charley to be married?"

Kate, whose inconsequent way of thinking had never acquired the smallest respect for telegraphic brevity, replied by wire:

"How in the world did you guess our secret? I rather think Hazel did that. Anyhow, it is very disappointing, because we intended to surprise you with it. We'll be married the day before Christmas, or rather that was our plan till to-day, when Charley came over to tell me we must be

married three days sooner because he has a case or something in Washington that will come on for a hearing or something else very dignified. I can't make it clear in a telegram, but perhaps you'll understand, though I don't. Anyhow, you and Hazel are to come home for the occasion because we sha'n't feel as if we were really married unless you two are here to sanction the proceeding. By the way, please ask Hazel to buy me some rose-colored silk — she'll know what it's for and you sha'n't know, because you're a mere man. Tell her I want six yards, and she knows the exact shade.

"When are you two coming home?"

.

Rhett replied:

"Sorry, but we are not coming home. Going to Africa on wedding journey. Details by mail."

Then he called a stenographer and dictated a letter to Charles Danforth, in which he explained the plans he had made for the conversion of Mannamac plantation into a vast market garden, with Italians to cultivate it.

"I invented that scheme," he wrote, "as a

solution of the negro problem, but it isn't anything of the kind. Most of the plantations are far less favorably situated than Mannamac, with its easy access to the Northern markets by water. But at any rate, this arrangement will solve the problem of making Mannamac pay you and Kate the income it ought to pay. We sail for the Mediterranean three days hence. On our return we shall expect to be invited to Mannamac. If we aren't, we'll go there anyhow. You know I want to execute papers making the plantation entirely Kate's, by relinquishing my absurd reversionary interest in it."

Having finished dictating his letter to Danforth, Rhett turned to his desk and with his own hand wrote to Hazel.

"I have employed three women and two men," he wrote, "to make all arrangements for our marriage in Grace Church on Tuesday morning at eight o'clock. We will drive thence directly to our ship, which sails at ten. In the meantime I want you to go down to Mrs. T. Lynch's — you know where it is — and buy the beautiful string of pearls that I have told them to show you, and

send it as *your* wedding present to Kate. I shall send her nothing except something like a car-load of flowers that I have ordered expressed from Richmond. I enclose a check with which you are to pay for the pearls."

The ship was well out at sea when Hazel said: "It seems a pity, Warren, that you couldn't have stayed at Mannamac long enough to see your experiment wrought out."

"My dear Hazel, so far as results are concerned, my visit to Mannamac was completely satisfactory. Now sing it, please."

And, to her own accompaniment on the guitar, she sang: "Love is the sum of it all."

The passengers thought she sang with unusual sympathy and appreciation of the song.

Warren Rhett thought so, too.

THE END.

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